Joseph A Monday 10 June 1663.

A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie.

Being a Letter Written to his much Honoured Friend Mr. *Nath. Bisbie.*

By

SAM: PARKER A. M. C. T.

And Fellow of the Royall Society.

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To the Reverend

Dr BATHVRST,

The Worthy and Learned

PRESIDENT

Of *TRINITT COLLEDGE* in OXFORD.

Reverend Sir,

I Shall not need (as the Custome is) to argue the decency and fitnesse of this addresse, nor to excuse its many nice and criticall Solœcismes, because your absolute and unalienable Right to all the Fruits of my Studies has made it due and necessary; (and the Obligations of Duty cancell all the Lawes of Indecency) so that if to present you with so mean a trifle be unhandsome, yet not to have done it, would have

been unjust. For my Studies (Sir) are too deeply indebted to your Incouraging Directions, to make any other repayment then by entirely resigning themselves up into your hands, and therefore I cannot alienate any thing that's theirs, from being Yours, without being guilty at once of the greatest Injustice and Ingratitude. So that though I do but Injure Your Name by concerning its Authority in behalf of so worthlesse a Trifle, yet an Injury that's the result of Duty and Gratitude, may hope for not only your Pardon, but (such Sir is your Candour) your Acceptance too; since you cannot suspect the Reality of my Resentments, when I decline not so Criminal an Evidence thereof, and rather wilfully chose to commit any Faults and Indecencies then lose the least Opportunity to prove it.

I will not be so troublesome as to remind you of the retaile of your Obligations, yet there is one, whose peculiar matchlesnesse obliges

obliges me to as peculiar an acknowledgment. For to your prevailing advice (Sir) do I owe my first Rescue from the Chains and Fetters of an unhappy Education, then which 'twas impossible either for you to have conferred, or for me to have received a greater benefit, there being no Perfection to be Valued at so high a Rate as a true Freedome and Ingenuity of Mind: 'Tis this, that distinguishes Churches from Heards. And those men that have laid aside the free and impartiall use of their Reasons, are just as fit for Religion as Sheep and Oxen, for they differ only in this, that the one are Brutes without Reason, and the other Brutes with it. How could the Scythian have sacrificed Rationall Beings, had he not first sacrificed his Reason; or the Egyptian adored Irrationall Creatures, had not himself been one? Onyons could never have been Deities if Egyptians had been men; but when Reason was once banished the Temples, no

wonder if folly and ſuperſtition commenced Religion; a ſtock might be a Deity when the Prieſt was no more. But (Sir) the exceſſe of my Joy and Zeal tempt me to be impertinent.

Philoſophie may perhaps think her ſelfe hardly dealt with, to have two of her famouſeſt Sects call'd to the Barre by ſo mean a Cleark as my ſelf, yet I think I have done them not a little Honour in citing them before ſo Eminent a Judge, and one ſo much their Peer in all Sublime Learning and Generoſitie of Soul; that their great Maſters Zeno *and* Plato *might juſtly Reſign the Chair, and yield their Porch and Academy inferior to the Colledge that you Preſide. Where the many good foundations, and grounds of Polite Literature, that you alone have laid, may well be thought the only* Taliſmans *of its preſent flouriſhing and proſperous Condition. Theſe Papers therefore which were formed and batched under*

der your immediate Influences, being to take their flight abroad into the World, ought to be legitimated by no other then that Sun, which has alwayes ſhined ſo favourably upon all my Endeavours.] [*I cannot but acknowledge* (Sir) *that I have one ſelfiſh deſign in this Epiſtolary Addreſſe; namely, to bribe your affection that it may defend me from the Power of your Fudgment. 'Tis a very unuſuall requeſt I confeſſe, but yet 'tis mine at preſent, that you would be pleaſed to Protect me from your ſelf; For I here offer to your ſight that Paper which (did I not know your Candor to be proportion'd to your other Accompliſhments) I could even wiſh might eſcape it. And thus* (Sir) *by prefixing your Name to this Pamphlet, I have not onely Reſcued it from your own Fudgment, and the Contempt of others, but have alſo in ſome meaſure gratified my own Pride, in that to many as ſhall chance by the ſight thereof,*

to understand that there's such a thing as I in the world, may withall be informed of the Honour and Happinesse I have in being

Reverend Sir,

Your most Faithfull, most obliged, and most humble Servant,

SAM: PARKER.

A Free and Impartiall

ACCOUNT OF THE Platonick Philoſophie.

SIR,

EE that are ſo inconſiderate, as to print Bookes, ſell our ſelves into the greateſt *Slavery* in the world, being thereby expoſed to the ſevere commands of thoſe that know us, and ſeverer laſhes of thoſe that know us not: ſo that you may perhaps ſooner expect to find me in a *Venetian Gally* then in the Preſſe again. Not as if I were either ſo little a Philoſopher, as to regard other mens Cenſures, (for I have too little eſteem for the Generalitie of Mankind, to be at all concern'd how they eſteem of me, and you know 'tis one of my greateſt deſignes in this world, to be one of the moſt unconcern'd men in it,) or ſo little your Friend, as to ſtile your commands Burthens: yet, (to be plain with you upon the warrant of our Philoſophick

Friendship) had they not surprised me at a very seasonable time, I had sent you no other reply, then either of Excuse, or flat Denyal: For, though I was then addressing my self to some *Mathematicall Studies*, to the pursuance whereof I had allotted the next portion of time, yet the main of my Studies for some weeks before had been employ'd in *Platonick Authors*, so that both my Brain and my Papers being well stuffed with *Ideas*, I was not displeased with the opportunity you have given me of Venting the one, and Methodizing the other.

The Task then you enjoyn me is, To give an account of two Passages in my *Tentamina Physico-Theologica*, The one out of the last Chapter of the first Book, in which I seem to exclaim against the *Platonick Philosophy*, as an ungrounded and Fanatick Fancy: The other out of the last Chapter of the second Book, where disputing against those that assert the necessity of the Worlds *Eternall Existence*, I was occasionally obliged, to glance upon the two grand Attributes of Gods *Dominion* and *Goodnesse*; hence you enjoyn me to make good my charge against *Plato* by giving you a larger, and more particular account of his Phylosophy, and to send you a further Explication of the Nature and Extent of the forementioned *Attributes*, especially, as they have reference to the lately reviv'd *Hypothesis* of the *Preexistence* of *Souls*, seeing

seeing I have there reckoned that up among other rash and unwarrantable opinions, which some men think to maintain from the Nature of *Gods goodness*, together with a special account of the groundlesness of the *Hypothesis* it self.

But if (*Sir*) I now pay one part of this Debt, I owe to your commands, I may safely presume upon your Candor for a forbearance of the other half, because (as I have often told you) although the Recreation, I sometimes take to frame my Thoughts and Conceptions into words, almost equals the Ravishing delight I derive from their first Births and Discoveries, yet too long a continuance at this employment is to me (and I believe to most men else) the most tedious and wearisome piece of Drudgerie in the world, so that if after this payment in part, you will but grant me a short respite to refresh my self with a little Variety, I do here engage to discharge the whole Debt, when ever you shall demand it. At present therefore deferring the latter half of my Task, I shall only send you as satisfactory an account of the *Platonick Philosophy*, as I am able, and that it may be as full and entire as its brevity will permit, I shall consider it in all its parts, according to the most usual, and perhaps most comprehensive division of Philosophy into Morality, Logick, Physick, and Natural Theology.

First

First then, as for their *Morality*, no *Platoniſt* can ſet an higher eſtimate upon it then my ſelf, for beſide thoſe uſeful and excellent Notices, which it teaches in common with the *Ethicks* of other Sects, it may challenge a ſignal Preheminence upon ſeveral accounts; as

1. In that the Rules and Directions it preſcribes are Sober and Practicable, it does not flatter men with *Romantick Degrees* of Happineſſe upon fond and fantaſtick Principles, but complies with the conditions of *Humane life*, and neither Promiſes nor Deſignes greater proportions of Felicity, then our preſent capacities will allow of. The *Platoniſts* were not ſo Vain as to comfort themſelves with high ſtrein'd Paradoxes againſt the convictions of Senſe and Experience: They do not teach us, when we are in the extremity of Pain and Anguiſh, to ſing, *Quàm ſuave, quàm dulce hoc eſt, Quam hoc non curo?* No, but they eſteemed of every thing as they found and felt it, and therefore whatſoever they experienced agreeable to their Natures they put into the Accounts of Good; as on the contrary, whatſoever they found to be a Grievance, they needed no other inducement to convince them of its Evil. Whereas it was the humour of the *Stoicks*, rather to ſtrein for *Paradoxes* and *Bravery*, then give practicable Rules of Life: And there-

therefore it was well observed by some of the *Antients*, that never any man could attain to that height of wisdome, which the *Stoical Philosophy* pretends to. *Stoici eam sapientiam* (saies *Cicero*) *interpretantur, quam nemo unquam mortalis est consecutus*; And *Seneca* speaking of a true *Stoick*; *Fortasse* (saies he) *nunquam Phœnix fuerit anno quingentesimo nascitur*, and then only mentions the single instance of *Cato*. But the last time I had the happinesse to Discourse with you, you was sufficiently convinc'd how little the vertue of *Cato*, and the honesty of *Regulus* are to be valued.

If you should demand of me an accoune of the Stoical Principles, they are such as these. That the Beggarly Stoick is the only Rich man, *unus dives, unus liber*, because forsooth he is Master of all other mens wealth. That he alone is beautiful, free, and noble, that all other men are ugly sordid slaves. That he alone is Prince and Emperour of the Universe. That he can vie Perfection and Happiness with God Himself, nay *Seneca* blushes not to affirm, *est aliquis qui sapiens antecedat Deum.* That he alone is a true Poet, Orator, Painter, Shoomaker, Cobler, Taylor, or that himself is good for every thing, and no body else good for any thing. That to kill a Swallow is not a lesse villany then *Parricide*. That 'tis as great a vertue to take a flea biting

Stoical P.

Epist. 53.

pati-

patiently, as it is to preserve ones Country by the most Gallant and Heroick Actions. That there is as much prudence in lifting up your finger with discretion, as in managing the *Roman Empire.* That he alwayes hath his will, Ἔυξαι εἴτι βούλει, πάντα σοι γενήσεται; Wish what you will, and you shall obtain what you wish: Like old decrepid *Iolaus* in *Euripides*, that by the force of a wish, retreived his youthful Vigour and Spritefulnesse, *&c.* After all which, you will think this a Paradox indeed, τὸν σοφὸν οὐ μανήσεσθαι, that 'tis impossible for a Stoick to be mad, So Extravagant are their Principles, that *Plutarch* has made it the Title of one of his Books, ὅτι παραδοξότερα οἱ Στωικοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν λέγουσι, *That the Stoicks talk more Extravagantly then the Poets.* I could quote you many places out of *Lucian* to this purpose against them, but then it must only be to shew you how well I am acquainted with his Writings, for he is every where so abusive and bitter in his Satyrs, against all sorts of Philosophers, that if his mouth be any slander, they must have been a pack of the vilest Villains that ever breathed, and upon that score I shall wave his Testimony: To proceed therefore,

Whereas it was a *Fundamental Principle* of the Stoicks, to esteem all things out of the power of a mans own will, ἀδιάφορα, *nor good nor evil*, and thence not to reckon Health;

Chear-

fulneſſe, good Name, Wealth, Friends, Sickneſſe, Grief, Diſgrace, Poverty, Enemies, into the accounts of Good or Evil: The *Platoniſts*, on the contrary, made their meaſures of Good and Evill, from the obſervations of Sence and Experience; They therefore went not about to perſwade themſelves that any accident, which they felt to be evill, was ere the leſſe ſo, by being placed beyond the reach and command of their own wills; but looking about into the Nature of things, they firſt found that *Man* was a complex and multifarious Being, integrated of Body and Soul, and ſo that his felicity could not be conſummate, if one conſtituent half of him was miſerable: and then, that the Body was liable to a thouſand forreign contingencies, which 'tis not in the power of the mind to avoid, but yet that *Virtue* and *Conſideration*, which have the moſt immediate, and moſt diffus'd influence upon the repoſe and ſatisfaction of man-kind, derive entirely from within a man's ſelf, and depend not at all upon any external occurrences; whence they concluded, that though the biggeſt portions of our felicity be at our own diſpoſals, yet that it muſt be acknowledged that ſome of the ſmaller parcels thereof are left to Chance, and uncertain Emergencies. And theſe they did not hope (with the Stoicks) to eſcape by a wilful ſenſeleſneſs and ſtupidity, like

like *Posidonius*, who when a very importunate fit of the Gout attempted to interrupt his Harangue before *Pompey*, cries out, *Nihil agis dolor, quamvis sis molestus, nunquam confitebor te malum esse*; But the course they took, was to purge their minds of froward & popular humours, and to sweeten them with mild and benign Principles; to moderate and command their passions, to furnish themselves with prudence and experience, and then whatever happened, to govern themselves by the Lawes of Wisdom and Moderation: Because, though all the Fountains of contentment are not within, nor do all our joys issue from our own Bowels, yet they receive their chiefe tinctures thence: and hereby almost all our happinesse is prudently confin'd within the compasse of our own minds; for all intellectual endowments (which are our greatest perfection, because they perfect and advance our highest faculties) depend upon our selves, and when the mind is furnished with Vertue and Wisdom, it is able to extract something beneficiall to its own Interests, from the most malicious accidents. For every thing having two ends as well as two handles, if a wise man miss the one, he will not faile to hit the other; as he in *Plutarch*, who throwing a stone at a dog, but hit his curst Mother in Law, said, *That he had not miss his Mark.* A Wise Man having his

his *Palladium* depoſited within his own boſome, by whatſoever circumſtances he is beſieged, muſt needs be ſecure, if by good, they miniſter to the delights of Temperance, if by bad, they are improved to the intereſts of Patience and Contentedneſs, ſo that though he be obnoxious to the ſpiteful injuries of Fortune, and may be aſſaulted by forreign calamities, yet his Mind (his Fort Royall) is impregnable, and in the middeſt of all diſappointments, its ſerenity ſhines as indiſturbedly as the Lights of *Pharos* in the middeſt of Storms and Tempeſts. Hereby you ſee that though many of the ingredients of our happineſs grow not within our ſelves, yet their compoſition being at our own diſpoſal, 'tis eaſie, either to adde to their good qualities, or to allay their bad ones. But becauſe herein conſiſts the Fundamental difference between the morality of the *Academicks* and *Stoicks*, I will endeavour to aſſert and illuſtrate it a little more clearly, by diſcuſſing the main objection of the Stoicks, which is this.

If (ſay they) our ſatisfaction ſhould depend upon forreign advantages, and any part of our happineſſe ſhould be beyond our power, then it being ſuſpended on a thouſand uncertainties, it would both render *Philoſophy* uſeleſſe, and the condition of *mankind* unavoidably calamitous and deplorable, in that no body

can

can be master of his own satisfaction, but must be forced to intrust it with so blind and so uncertain a thing as *Fortune*, and so must be de be continually liable to infinite misfortunes, and incessantly haraſſed with fears of looſing those things, which are not more necessary to his happiness, then they are uncertain and variable.

Though this objection be pregnantly answered by every mans Experience of humane affairs, yet partly because 'tis the main *Basis* of *Stoicism*, and partly because it reflects unhandsomely on the dealings of Providence, supposing that mankind would be hardly dealt with, if all his Goods be not placed within the confines of his own power, I shall endeavour to silence it for ever, which I think may be done by these ensuing considerations.

1. That our Earthly happiness is never mere and unmixt, but when 'tis pureſt, its diluted with some dashes of misery.

Οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο χωρὶς ἡδονὰ λύπης,
Ἀλλ' ἔστι τις σύγχρασις. *Eurip.*

Unallaied satisfactions are too Divine to be enjoyed any where, but where the Divinity it self Resides. For as to the happiness of this life, there is no one *ultimate Object* or *summum Bonum*, to the Acquisition whereof all other Goods do but contribute as *Intermedial Instruments*,

struments, but every thing that Ministers to our Contentment, is a Portion of our Soveraigne Happiness, which is nothing else but a mans present repose and satisfaction. I cannot therefore but commend that Principle of some of the *Cyrenaicks*, that neither expected, nor pursued any other happiness in this life, beside what was to be found in every single action and affaire thereof. For all unanimously teach, that the *tranquility* and *satisfaction* of the mind, is the Soveraigne happiness of this life, and yet that it is only an act of the mind exercised about its present objects, and not any distinct object thereof: But the Creatures are not replenished with that variety of perfections as to be able to gratifie all our Appetites, much less with that infinite fulness as to be able to satisfie them: for alas! all Created Beings are but small fragments of perfection, which only serve to support our Souls, till we arrive at the fruition of that *Object*, whose Prerogative it is to be adequate and satisfactory to all our desires and expectations. The Stoicks then forget themselves, when they think an impossibility of being certainly and entirely happy here, such an insupportable Misery, when all things in this World are by the unalterable Lawes of Providence imperfect, variable, and subject to the Vicissitudes of Fortune. Now Wise Men, that consider the Na-

ture and Inconstancy of things, will not design to themselves more raised degrees of Blessedness, then the World can afford: but will be content to be as happy as their owne Capacities, and the present Condition of things will permit, and not fruitlesly aspire to heights of felicity, which they can never reach.

2. Though some smaller parcels of our happiness be beyond the command of our wills, yet the greater Portions thereof are not: for instance, all that in which the Stoicks place their whole felicity, and that is pregnant enough of Tranquillity, to render our lives sedate and comfortable. What though some appendages of our happiness are out of our own reach, if the main body thereof be within it? Sure if Virtue be so Soveraign a good, as singly to compleat our felicity, it will be sufficient to support our repose in the absence of smaller helps and assistances; Why then should they deem our estate so deplorable, when we can be secure of our most important interests, though some lesser concernments be left to the disposal of fortune?

3. 'Tis in our power to alleviate and qualifie those evils, which 'tis not in our power to escape. What though I cannot avoid Sickness, Poverty, and Disgrace, yet I may by prudent reflection avoid being grieved at them, and may improve them to the benefits

of

of Vertue and Wisdome? The mould of a mans Fortune is in his own hands, though the materials are not. Although a firm and healthful habit of body be exceeding conducive to a chearful Tenor of mind, yet may I be chearful without it, though I might have been much more so with it. When I cannot suit evenes to my desires, I will suit my desires to them, and will compromise with those grievances that I cannot shun, and those blows of Fortune, I cannot ward off by Prudence, I will dead by meeting them with a hardy courage and resolution. I know I cannot bend the Laws of nature to my own will, there remains therefore no other remedy then that I sweeten and mollifie their rigour, by a chearful and generous complyance with them, and so according to that vulgar, but very wise saying, *Make a Vertue of Necessity*: and so that mettal that's most Solid and generous, is most malleable too. But (to dispatch) methinks it becomes not a *dull Apathist* to object that we should be disquieted with perpetual feares, if any parcel of our happines should not be lock'd up within our own Breasts: sure he might resolve, when there remain'd no other remedy, to cast himself into an *insensible Apathy*. However every man that premeditates the nature and uncertainty of things, will neither be so stupid, as to be surprised with any

disaster, nor so silly as to double it by a fruitless anxiety, but will make the best of his condition by prudence and discretion.

2. A second thing for which I value the *Platonists* above all other Philosophers, is the innocent Gayety and pleasantness of their Humors. For whether I look into their Principles, or into their lives, I can see nothing but what is calme and chearful. Nor beside that their complexions were generally brisk and spritely, the *Genius* of their Philosophy was free and facetious. It being one of its main principles, That as God had provided ineffable pleasures for good men in the next world, so he had made liberal provisions for their entertainment in this, and consequently that this life affords enough to please, though not to satisfie, whence they were willing to enjoy all its innocent pleasures and sensualities, though they thought them not of any great concernment to such as were furnished with capacities of rising above it, and aspiring to heavenly delights. And thus you may see how at the same time a wise man may enjoy the world and dispise it too. And from this manly and Philosophick indifferency of life resulted a handsome and generous contempt of death, for they did not so much defie it, out of a dogged neglect of living, as slight it out of a sober and Philosophick uncertainty, whether

ther it were better that they continu'd in their present happiness, or left it to enjoy more pure and generous delights. This was the main ground of *Socrates*'s undanted constancy in reference to death, because whether it were preferable before life, ἄδηλον παντὶ πλὴν ἢ τῷ Θεῷ, *it was uncertain and ambiguous to all but God alone*, as *Plato* concludes his incomparable Apology: Τὶς οἶδεν (saies *Euripides*) εἰ τὸ ζῆν εἰκὼ κατθανεῖν, τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν; *Who knows whether is life to live or dye?* To die, is to be born into another world, which every good man may justly presume he shall finde better than this. Though the main reason, why they were so willing to bid adieu to this present *Stage of life*, was an eager curiosity to be acquainted with the transactions and *Phænomena* of the next. And methinks, had I no other Rule to guide my self, by, then mere Philosophy, I could willingly play the Platonist in this particular: For though I am neither valiant nor miserable, and am as yet my green and unexperienced years, and have tasted less of sensual delights, then (I believe) any one plac'd in the same capacities and circumstances with my self (for I have hitherto scarce employ'd any of my senses, but that of seeing) insomuch that though my Palate be not surfeited and cloy'd with the the same repeated relishes, nor my Eye quite weary of beholding the same repeated objects,

yet I could be highly content (upon the account of a Philosophick curiosity) to leave this present Theatre that I might enter upon the next, for the delight of being entertain'd with a new Scene of things. *Socrates* having been discoursing of the condition of good men after death adds

In Apolog.

Ἐγὼ μὲν γὰρ πολλάκις ἐθέλω τεθνάναι, εἰ ταῦτά ἐστιν ἀληθῆ,

were I but sure of the truth of these things, I would die a thousand deaths, for an experimental knowledge of them. Besides the whole life of man is transacted in the short space of 24 hours, in the rest of his age he does but tread the same Stage over and over, the same businesses alwayes returning in the same compass of time. Now any wise or generous person, that shall but reflect upon the best spent day of his whole life, will scarce find the businesse of it so enticing, as to make him over greedy of more of it. But a man that has been running in this round severall yeares, should (methinks) be so sick and weary of doing the same thing over and over, as to be willing to be at *Rest*, or at least to change his *Employment*; so that though life be no misery, yet because there may be a satiety of it, death's a priviledge. But for the *Stoicks* (that I may continue the parallell with their only Rivals in morality) they founded their satisfaction upon a scornfull and Frierly contempt of every thing, and

and are so injurious to their Creator, as to teach that he has provided nothing to entertain his Creatures with, but a few such childish empty trifles, as grave men (*i. e.* Stoicks) should scorne to taste, much lesse to feed upon. But though the *Platonists* are not so impious as to think that God made the world vain, yet they are so wise and observing, as to perceive that it has made it self so: and therefore I meet with no Sect raised so much above the admired and gaudy trifles of the vulgar, as they, nor any more confidently putting the worlds Pomp quite out of countenance by a handsome and free spirited disdain, then they; nor any less concern'd in news, and the little transactions of humane affairs. Nor any better entertaining themselves with the various and odde humours of mankind, making dayly Comedies to themselves from the follies and little conceits of the *inconsiderate many*. Thus the spangled and glittering Squire, who came to *Athens* very brave & gallant, with a numerous train of Attendants, supposing himself fine enough to be adored by the *Athenians*, & to be reputed at least a *Demi-God*, was by the discreet and facetious Satyrs of the *Platonick Philosophers* laughed out of his vanity, and reduc'd to discretion and sobriety. And thus the Platonist in *Lucian* raises mirth to himself from the several Acts of the Play; now he laughs at the Rich

mans displaying his *Purple*, with his troublesome croud of poor-spirited Sycophants; anon pleasing himself with the disturbances and foolish madnesse of the *Horse-race*; and then with those pretty passages which happen at Funerals and making of Wills; next at the silly pleasures of great Feasts and curious Entertainments; and then at the little tumults and odde contingencies at the *Baths*, &c. But to conclude this head, the *Platonists* were generous souls, that being raised above the little concernments and *under-Shreiveries* of this life (as the *Cardinals of Rome* are pleased to stile all secular employments) sate as unconcern'd spectators, looking down from aloft, with pitty and disdain, upon the odde Carriage of humane affaires. And happy is he

——Celsâ qui mentis ab arce
Despicit errantes, humanaque gaudia ridet,

For no Prospect is so pleasant and delightful to the mind of man, as when he sees all the *world* below *him*, and beholds all others scrambling for, and aspiring to those things which himself contemns and tramples upon.

3. The third good quality of the *Platonists*, was their valuing *good-nature* at so high a rate, which though it be a constitution no lesse virtuous and excellent, then 'tis charming and amiable, yet the estimate they set upon it was pro-

proportionable to its real value. Whence resulted that exceeding delight they took in the Society of ingenious and sweet-natur'd young Gentlemen, upon which score they profest themselves as great *Votaries* to the *Celestial Venus*, as common Mortals are to the *Earthly one*; for their Amours were not kindled by lust and petulancy (they being professedly the most generous contemners of Women in the World) but were pure and cleanly enough to become Angels and separated souls, *Plato*'s Love-Lawes forbidding to court any other objects then abstracted and intellectual Beauties. And *Plotinus* makes it the first ascent to wisdome, to be affected with the meer proportions of *Harmony* abstracted from the sensible sound, and to be enamour'd with the features of beauty, without respect to the body, which they render beautiful. And yet hence some have taken occasion to slander *Plato* himself (together with his incomparable master *Socrates*) as guilty of that unnatural beastlinesse of the lustfull Sodomites. Although *Plato* at the end of his *Convivium* has said as much to remove all suspicion from *Socrates*, as a matter of this nature is capable of. And himself in his first Book of Lawes detests and strictly prohibits this [illegible] dishonourable impurity as [illegible] a most unnatural

V. Platonis Convivium.

l. 1. c. 3.

moral impudence. But the forementioned calumny had never gain'd any credit with us, had it not been reported by some of the Ancient Fathers, and yet it is too notorious to dissemble that they were not only very careless in their relations concerning the *Philosophers*, being apparently guilty of innumerable [illegible] but also in many Instances highly disingenious, insomuch that I find no Prose-writer so agree so much with their reports as *Lucian*, whose main design it was to abuse every body that was grave and sober. Which may a little appear by giving you an account of the original and progress of the forementioned slander.

The first Authors then of this and other resembling reports were the *Comick-Poets*, who were persons of a free, droling, and Satyrical humour, and whose chief designe in their Comedies, was to abuse men with roguish and unlucky Stories; whatever was their *Argument*, their *Plot* was alwayes *Satyr*. They therefore who flourished about the time of the *Peloponesian Warre*, when the Government of *Athens* was popular, were wont to traduce the great and rich men of the *City*: But when the *Grandees* were grown too big to be brought upon the Stage (by the alteration of the Government into an *Aristocracy*) they betook themselves to abuse former Poets, and in that Age, *Homer* was sufficiently lashed, but after-

afterwards, when *Philosophy* began to flourish, the Philosophers (upon every small quarrel that hapned between them and the Poets) were brought upon the Stage, and persecuted with all their *Satyrs*. And thus this foul charge of Sodomy, wherewith *Socrates* has been so loudly impeached, was nothing else but a malitious invention of *Aristophanes*, who having an implacable pique against him, endeavour'd by all means to render him both odious and ridiculous: For *Socrates* being of a grave and severe humour did not a little distrelish the vanity and looseness of the Stage; whereupon *Aristophanes* the Poet (argument of that Age) was so nettled, that he immediately left the old *Comical Argument* of droling upon former Poets, and set himselfe to abuse the Philosophers, but especially *Socrates*, all whose actions he continually persecuted with sharp and unlucky Satyrs. And therefore whereas *Socrates* was wont to take home to himself, the most ingenious & spritely Youths, he could meet with, to bestow upon them an Education proportionable to their parts, *Aristophanes* (with too much foulness for any ingenuous Person) represents him as one that pickt up the loveliest youths, to the foulest & most beastly purposes. And whereas *Socrates* taught, that God was to be sought after in Heaven, & not in their Images, *Aristophanes*

ner perſtringes him as one that Worſhipped the *Clouds*, and to this end he Wrote his Nubes only to abuſe *Socrates* and his *Gods*. Neither did their Malice reſt here, but proceeded to Death and Baniſhment; For the Poets had the greateſt hand in the impeachment of *Socrates*; & *Melitus*, that was his moſt vehement Accuſer, was one of *Ariſtophanes*'s Players. And a while after (about the CXX *Olimpiad*) one *Sophocles*, a Pragmatical fellow of the *Poetick Faction*, procured a Decree for the Baniſhment of all the Philoſophers from *Athens*, which took effect, till at length the Controverſie being fairly debated before the Senate, the cauſe of the Philoſophers ſeem'd ſo apparently innocent to them, that they immediately cauſed the Decree to be cancelled, ordered that the Philoſophers ſhould be ſpeedily called home, and fined *Sophocles* five Talents. Now, though the Fathers could never meet with any ſuch filthy Relations in ſober and impartial Hiſtorians, yet becauſe they apprehended (though very ineptly) that it made for the intereſt of Chriſtianity, that the beſt men among the Heathens ſhould be but bad enough, rather then be deſtitute of competent Teſtimonies againſt *Socrates*, (the moſt eminent inſtance of *Ethnick* Vertue) they would cite them from ſuch as were not only his Enemies, but Poets and Satyriſts too, *i.e.* from thoſe who were

were not onely obliged by their design to abuse all men, especially the wiser and more serious sort, but also were incensed with a peculiar spite & malice against him. Any one therefore that is acquainted with the *Genius* of the *Grecian Comedy* in general, and with this now mentioned Contest of the Philosophers and Comedians in particular, will be far from thinking their Satyrs a sufficient Testimony against any man's Morality. And therefore some of our modern Criticks are not very kind to the Philosophers, when they think a good part of the Philosophick History is to be collected out of the Ancient Comedians. Having consum'd so many lines in Vindicating our Philosophers chastity, I shall wave adding any farther Evidences of the goodness of their Natures, onely give me leave to throw in this single item thereof, that in the *Platonick History* you may meet with more instances of true Philosophick & Heroick Friendship, then in all the world beside. They were indeed generally somewhat too fond of their Friends, & it was their expressing the offices of Friendship and good-Nature (by way of Allusion) in amorous terms, that gave too much ground for the forementioned slander.

And now (Sir) how much will this Excellent Quality recommend them to our esteem, when we consider at how high a rate our Blessed

fed Saviour himself valued it? If we look into his Lawes, what are they but so many injunctions to the severall instances of *good nature*, Mildnesse, Patience, Mercifulnesse, Humility, Candor, Ingenuity? His new and peculiar Precepts, That we should love one another, and be kind not onely to Friends, but Enemies? And therefore a peevish ill-natur'd Christian, is the greatest contradiction in the World. Peevishnesse being the greatest reproach and weaknesse of humane Nature, and most contrary to the temper of the Divine Mind: So that they, who, not long since, were wont to discourse, that the Saints or People of God (*i. e.* That sort of people who can be Devout and Godly, without being Vertuous) are indeed peevish here, but in Heaven this imperfection shall be removed, might as well have told us, that the Saints are *Drunkards* here, but in Heaven they shall be Temperate; the Saints are *Cheats* and *Knaves* here, but in Heaven they shall be Honest; the Saints are *Adulterers* here, but in Heaven they shall be Chast; for an habituall Peevishnesse is as inconsistent with the design of Christianity, as the sins of an habituall dishonesty, Drunkennesse, and Adultery. And then if we look into our Saviours Life, the unparallel'd civility and obligingnesse of his Deportment, seems to be almost as high an

Evidence

Evidence of the Truth and Divinity of his Doctrine, as his unparallel'd Miracles were; For 'tis altogether unimaginable that so sweet-natur'd a Person should be such a base and profligate Impostor, as he must have been, if he had been one. And among all his Favourites, it was the Gentle and sweet-natur'd St. *John* that was his darling Disciple; whilst we often find him checking *Peters* rude and unmannerly Zeal.

But all this while, by *good Nature*, I do not barely design a sweet Complexion and temperament of Body; (though that is an happy advantage to Vertue) but such a Divine and Gracious temper of Mind as produces a sincere kindnesse and benevolence towards all men. 'Tis the fairest Character and Imitation of the Deity, that distributes his Bounty to all, and like his own Sun, shines upon the Just and Unjust. 'Tis a *Catholick Charity* that enfolds the whole World in the Arms of love and kindnesse. Only there are some persons of such peevish and self confined Spirits, that will not suffer themselves to be embraced by those, whose unbounded embraces equally comprehend all, and disdaine to be but the partiall objects of an impartiall Love. These men confine the *displays* of their love and tenderneſſe, within the narrow and contracted Circumference

conference of a ſmall party, and Excommunicate the reſidue of Mankind as unworthy their charity, and think it a great pollution to entertain any kind thoughts for any beſides themſelve, confining the Elect within the walls of *Rome* or *Geneva*: Now againſt ſuch teſty and irregular Spirits, the ſweeteſt Natures have the greateſt Antipathies, not from any malice or bitterneſs againſt their Perſons, but from a true Zeal for largneſs and ingenuity of Spirit, and a real hatred againſt all thoſe Peſtilent qualities that tend to ſupplant or deſtroy it. Whence the *Bleſſed Jeſus* (who was the higheſt and moſt matchleſs Patterne of all the Inſtances of Goode Nature) was remarkably ſharp and ſevere in his Invectives againſt the Phariſees; becauſe theſe Ill-natured Fellows deſpiſed and ſcorned all that were not of their Sect, endeavouring to confine all Goodneſs to their own Faction, and looking upon the reſt of Mankind as a rout of vile and worthleſſe Reprobates. Now, though our Saviour could win and oblige *Publicans* and *Harlots*, (perſons of the moſt debauch'd and looſeſt lives) by his mild and ſweet Deportment, yet when He had to do with theſe holy Phariſaical Zelots, his uſual Language was, *Ye Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites, ye are of your Father the Devil.* There being nothing more hateful to God, then a high pretender

tender to Religion, void of Charity and true Goodneſſe.

I have heard ſome men (of a bitter and envious Complexion, that have too much Gall to have the innocence of Doves, and that through the bitterneſs of their own Spirits, cannot reliſh the ſweetneſſe of Good-Nature) enveigh againſt the advancing of Good Nature, as if it were a more neat and ſecret deſign of undermining the Intereſts of Religion, and advancing thoſe of Atheiſm. A Calumny as abſurd as 'tis impious: For how can that undermine Religion, which is its prime intendment? Can any Deſign be injur'd or defeated by its intrinſick and proper end? And what more evident, then that one of the main purpoſes of Chriſtianity, is to ſweeten and refine our Natures? What does our Law-giver more vehemently and frequently urge, then Meekneſſe, Mercifulneſſe, Humility, and other reſembling Inſtances of Good-Nature? What bids greater defiance to the genuine Spirit of Chriſtianity, then rude, churliſh, and ungentile Peeviſhneſſes? What more lovely in the *Bleſſed Jeſus* then the ſweetneſſe and obligingneſſe of his Converſation? What did he ever more inveigh againſt, then an uncivil and Phariſaical Zeal, howſoever otherwiſe ſincere and cordial? ſo that if to urge upon men the practice of Good-natur'd Qua-

lities be to supplant Christianity, then Christianity must supplant and contradict itself.

But men have unhappily of late Christned a sort of sulphureous and Fanatique fire, by the name of Zeal: And when once their minds are tainted and enraged by this hot devotionall Zeal, 'tis as natural to them to be rude and base-natur'd, as 'tis to Dogs and Tigres. Zeal is a fire in the Soul, which unlesse qualified & slaked by meekness and a calme nature, doth not only prey upon the mind, and devour its intellectual Powers, and enflame all the Passions, but its rage breaks forth, and sets whole States and Kingdoms into a combustion, and reduces the whole World to Ashes; the greatest Zealots always proving the greatest Incendiaries; so that what *Homer* sayes of the *Syrian* Star, is not more true of any thing then this fiery Zeal,

Δαμφοίνατος μὲν ἔχ' ἐστι, κακὸν δὲ τε σῆμα τέτυκται,
Καὶ τε φέρει πολλὰς πυρετὸν δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι. *Iliad.* χ.

4. A fourth preheminence of the *Platonists* (that I may insist on no more) is their readiness and ability in the smaller Morals, by which I mean their skill in all the Arts of behaviour & conversation. For though I have sufficiently experienced a modest shamefacedness, & uncoothness in ceremonial addresses, to be the natural and unavoidable results of privacy, (as all Metals contract rust by lying) yet the

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Platoniſts, notwithſtanding their contemplative retiredneſs, were not inferior to the moſt poliſhed Courtiers, in the neatneſs and complaiſance of their Deportment. Which I am apt to aſcribe chiefly to the readineſs & pregnancy of their Fancies; for though a ſound and ſteddy judgment (which rarely goes in company with ſubtil and flaſhy imaginations) is the moſt uſeful and commanding ability in buſineſſe, yet 'tis the quick and ſpritely fancy that takes and commands moſt in converſe. A ſtrong ready wit, with a bold and plauſible Tongue, ſhall win more reſpect and reputation, then all other more valuable and emproving accompliſhments, if wanting theſe advantages. Beſides, they did not ſpend all their time and diligence in Bookiſhneſs, which renders Scholars ſoft, ſilly, unexperienced things, but propoſing to themſelves ability and judgment in buſineſſe, as one main end of Study, they rather uſed their Learning, then admired it, according to that Aphoriſm of my Lord *Bacon*, *Crafty men contemn ſtudies, ſimple men admire them, & wiſe men uſe them.* But the main ground of their good meen, was their being bleſt with all the advantages of nature & education. Were it not too tedious to run through the whole ſucceſſion of the *Academy* from the firſt riſe thereof to its utmoſt period, it would not be difficult to repreſent to you, how every

member thereof superinduced to a pure complexion, and a gentile education the advantages of Travel and severe study; and what more could be desired to compleat them in all the Realities and Ornaments of Humane Nature? As *Plato* himself was of so well-temper'd a complexion, that he chose an unhealthy place of residence, for a check and Revulsion to his too high and luxuriant habit of Body, & yet liv'd to a great age unacquainted with sickness and diseases, and at last this *Socratick Swan* expired insensibly in a pleasant contemplation: *Est etiam* (saies *Cicero*) *quieta & pura atq; eleganter acta ætatis placida ac lenis senectus, qualem accepimus Platonis, qui uno & octuagesimo ætatis anno scribens mortuus est.* And then for his Parentage, though I do as little credit that he was begot either by *Apollo* or by a *Spectre* in his shape, as I do that he was born of a *Virgin Mother*, (& yet both are reported by many Authors, and seem to be believed by more) yet 'tis past doubt that his extraction was from two of the most Antient and most Noble Families in *Athens*, his Mother *Perictione* being of the race of *Solon*, and his Father *Ariston* of the Family of the *Codri*. And then for his Education he was no Athenian Cockney, but was *Socrates*'s darling favourite, Travelled into all parts of the Learned World, resided a considerable time in the

the Court of *Dionyſius*, where he was both admired and envied by the Courtiers for the unaffected Gracefulneſſe of his addreſſes, and ſome ſay the reaſon why he received ſo bad uſage from the *Tyrant*, was that he excell'd him ſo far in all the Arts and charms of converſation, that he ſeem'd to be almoſt as much reſpected and admired as himſelf. For he knew how to be facetious without being vaine, or trifling, and how to be ſerious without being ſour or moroſe, his behaviour was alwaies mild and courteous, his humour alwaies cheerful and uniform, and his gravity at an equal diſtance from moroſeneſs and vanity; to be brief, he was entirely adorn'd with all the accompliſhments that can command either love or honour. And then for *Plotinus*, his deportment (as *Porphyrie* relates in his life) was ſo gentile, that his Audience was compos'd of a confluence of the Nobleſt and moſt Illuſtrious Perſonages in *Rome*; his integrity ſo eminent, that he was deputed over-ſeer to moſt of their Wills, and Arbitrator in moſt of their Controverſies, and yet mannaged all with that Candor, Prudence, and Sincerity, as that he neither loſt one Friend, nor Purchaſed one Enemy in five and twenty years Reſidence at *Rome*; For the reſt of his life conſult *Porphyrie* & *Eunapius*. For the life of *Porphyrie*, I refer you to *Eunapius*, but yet I cannot

omit this ſingle inſtance of the goodneſs of his humour, that after an obſtinate conflict, and many reiterated controverſial Reincounters with *Amelius*, as ſoon as he was convinced that *Truth* and *Amelius* ſtood together, he neither ſcrupled to make a Publick Recantation then, nor to record it to Poſterity, that himſelf was baſled (as he has done in the life of *Plotinus*) then which we ſcarce know a greater inſtance of an Heroick Candour. For *Proclus* conſult his Scholar *Marinus* the *Neopolitan*, and *Philoſtratus the younger De vitis Sophiſtarum* (I ſay the younger, becauſe he was Nephew to him that wrot the Hiſtory of *Apollonius Tyanæus*, though they be uſually confounded upon the Authority of that careleſs Rhapſodiſt *Suidas*, who has been the Author of infinite other reſembling miſtakes) laſtly conſult *Eunapius* for the lives of *Ædeſius*, *Iamblicus*, *Sopater*, (*Conſtantines* unhappy favourite) *Euſtathius*, and his eminent wife *Soſipatra* (of whom ſo many ſtrange ſtories are reported,) *Criſpus* one of *Julian*'s Courtiers, a man of eminent prudence and policy, *Oribaſius Julian*'s Phyſician, *Maximus* and *Chryſanthius* his great Favourites, the former whereof, was an eminent Courtier during the time of *Julian*'s Reign, and afterwards (I fear too much) an inſtance of Chriſtian Cruelty and Revenge; though the generous *Chryſanthius*

him could never be diverted from his Philoſophick retirements by all the Emperours immortality: *Proæreſius*, who was ſo famous an Orator, that the City of *Rome* erected to him a publick Statue of Braſs with this inſcription, *Regina Rerum Roma, Regi Eloquentiæ. Hephæſtion, Himerius, Libanius, Nymphidianus*, &c. and you will find them ſuch a ſucceſſion of Gentile, Vertuous, and Generous Perſons, that the *Ethnick* world cannot ſhew the like. To theſe I might adde the novel reſtorers of *Platoniſm*; for as the *Platonick* ſucceſſion expired not long after the reign of *Julian*, having received its mortal wound from *Conſtantine*, who diſſolved their Schools and diſperſed their Profeſſors; ſo about the fourteenth *Century*, it began to revive and to wreſtle with *Ariſtotle*'s Philoſophy: for ſome of the *Grecian Prelates*, that then ſate in the *Council of Florence* (call'd to reconcile the *Greek* & the *Latine* Churches) ſeeing all other Philoſophy quite daſhed out of Countenance in theſe Weſtern Parts by the *Ariſtotelian*, they were not a little zealous to reſtore that of *Plato*; whence aroſe the diſputes between *Georgius Trapezuntius*, and *Georgius Scholarius* on the behalf of *Ariſtotle*, and *Beſſarion* Biſhop of *Nice*, (made Cardinal for his eminent ſervices in the Council) and *Gemiſtus Pletho* on the behalf of *Plato*. But *Pletho* getting into favour with

Laurentius Cosmo the Great Duke, inspired him with such a mighty zeal for the Platonick Philosophie, that he immediately devoted young *Ficinus* (Son to one of the chiefest Physicians) to its Restauration, and educated him accordingly; and invited that worthy Heroe *Johannes Picus* the Earl of *Mirandula*, *Georgius Vespusius*, *Christophorus Landinus*, *Angelus Politianus*, and others to *Florence*, where they erected an Academy. Which, with much more, you may meet with in the extant Epistles of the Earl of *Mirandula*, *Marsilius Ficinus*, & *Angelus Politianus*. But I proceed, though the *Platonists* could Artificially conform their Behaviour to the more refined and Gentile sort of Men, yet as for that salvage Beast, the Popular Rout, they valued no more to please them, then to gratifie Wolves or Tigres; for really (Sir) folly is so moulded into the Constitution of the common and mechanical sort of men, that that Philosopher must be well-nigh as absurd as they, who supposes them capable of wisdom, when they have scarce wit or judgment enough to think a thought, that is not inept and ridiculous. Their childish and froward humour is not unhandsomely displayed by *Charon*. "All that they "think is Vanity, all that they say is false "and erroneous; that they reprove is good, "that they approve is naught; that which

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"they praise is infamous, that which they do and undertake is folly. So that 'tis not possible for any man, who aspires to wisdome, to condescend to any compliance with their base and absurd humours: And therefore these Sons of wisdome were as regardlesse of them, as of Apes and Baboons.

But now for the *Stoicks*, their Conversation was insolent and supercilious, their looks affected and artificial, their Deportment was such a soure and morose behaviour, as the vulgar stile gravity. And I think *Josephus* was not much mistaken, when he describ'd the rude and ill-natur'd *Pharisees* by comparing them with the Stoicks, ἡ Φαρισαίων (sayes he, describing his own Sect) αἵρεσις παραπλήσιός ἐστι τῇ παρ' Ἕλλησι στοῖ ἢ λεγομένῃ. For as the supercilious Pharisees accounted their own Sect the only School of Sanctity, so the Stoicks esteem'd themselves the onely Sons of Wisdom, and all others Children, Fools, and Madmen. I might both evidence these things by several particular instances, and adde severall other Prerogatives of the *Platonick Morality*, but because I fear I have more need to beg your pardon for having been already so tedious, I shall onely tell you, that you may find the fairest and exactest Idea and Picture thereof in the Life and Precepts of *Socrates*, the severall lineaments of which lie scattered and diffused

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in *Plato*'s Writings, but are pretty handsomly collected into one Table in a late *French* discourse of Mr. *Julien Davion*, Entitled, *Le Crayon du Christianisme en la Philosophie de Socrate.*

And now I proceed to the next part of my Task, their *Logick*, of which my censure is briefly this, That as *Plato*'s manner of arguing is more succinct then the tedious way of Syllogising, so 'tis not lesse sure and evident, for what discourse can proceed with greater evidence and conviction, then after you have explain'd the Terms of the Question, and agreed with your Adversary about the matter debated of, to propose to him some Principles so clear and palpable, that they shall either presuppose or enforce his assent, and from thence to lead him by *Induction* through a series of propositions depending upon and orderly deduced from your first *Proleptick Principles*, till he is fairly brought or unawares betrayed into an unavoidable necessity of assenting to the Truth you assert? Which is the method that *Plato* pretends to. I must confesse that arguing by *Syllogismes* is more sutable to Youths and Novices in Reason, but 'tis far more Elegant and Manly, to manage a few short Interrogatories with that dexterity and strength of Reason, as thereby to distresse your Adversary so farre,

farre, as to force him either to Seal to your Opinion, or to retract his own former concessions: For in the former Method, the Disputant moves on by slow Progressions, and takes a great compasse about to approach and get up to his Enemy; but in the latter his motion is quick and nimble, and the engagement so direct and smart, that it cannot be closely pursued, but by Persons very expert and knowing in the Art and Lawes of Reasoning.

But some that make the best Lawes, are not allwayes their best observers. Thus though *Plato*'s discoursings about practicall matters are exceeding handsome and pertinent, yet when he treats of speculative Notions, his rules of arguing could not be more strict, close, and exact, then his Argumentations were wide, loose, & incoherent: When *Patricius* confidently asserts *Plato*'s demonstrations in his *Permenides* to be so strong and undeniable, *Ut nullæ tales apud Mathematicum ullum reperiantur*; I commend his confidence, but dare not contradict his assertion, because I think it unhandsome to contradict in a matter, which I dare not be very confident I understand. But when *Cardinal Bessarion* asserts, *Totum Platonis Timæum ex syllogismis demonstrativis constare*; I who have read over that discourse with

In his Plato Exotericus.

Adv. Calum. l. 1. c. 5.

with as much caution and attention as I could, dare (by the Cardinals leave) pronounce that there is not one demonſtrative ſyllogiſme in the whole Book; nay that there is not one true and valid Argument, but that the whole diſcourſe is weak and incoherent: And (to ſpeak out plainly) that Perſon will much oblige me, that ſhall direct me to one material ratiocination about *ſpeculative Theories* in all *Plato*'s Writings, where I cannot ſhew him ſome manifeſt flaw or other. For they either (1.) bottome upon uncertain and inevident Principles, as they generally do; but becauſe there can be no certainty in the concluſion, without a certainty in the premiſes, and the certainty of intermediate propoſitions depends upon the firſt, if that be uncertain, the whole trayn of Inferences deduced from it, (though aptly connected to each other) muſt needs be ſo too. Or elſe (2.) they are circular, as in his *Meno* he bottomes the Souls Reminiſcency of thoſe Ideas, it converſed with in a former ſtate, upon its preſuppoſed Immortality; and yet in his *Phædo*, he fairly argues for the Souls Immortality from its preſuppoſed Reminiſcency. And any one that peruſes his Writings warily, will find them to abound with infinite ſuch Circles. Or (3.) he wanders into matters remote and impertinent to the Subject and Argument of his Diſcourſe, roving into

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diſputes of a quite diſtant nature from the Queſtion in debate; or beating about through wild, intricate, and uncertain Ambages, or taking a wide and tedious compaſſe to purſue and drive a trivial word into its proper ſignification. Though perhaps this charge will admit of an Apologie. Becauſe moſt of his diſputes were mannaged againſt the *Sophiſts* of that age, who made it their whole buſineſſe to maintaine wrangles by tricks and ſhifts of words, and therefore whoever undertook to diſpute againſt them, muſt of neceſſity be ingaged in word quarrels. And hence it was that *Plato* does almoſt every where take ſuch large compaſſes meerly to vindicate the ſignification of a ſingle word againſt their idle cavils, and though ſometimes he may purſue his task preſly and coherently, yet becauſe of the ſmall importance of the matter debated of, his diſcourſe muſt needs be both very tedious and not very profitable. Or elſe (5.) there is ſome flaw and incoherence in ſome of the intermediate propoſitions, which muſt needs marre the chain of his whole Diſcourſe: For the certain knowledge of *Conſequences* is only *conditional*, and ſuppoſes the Truth of *Premiſes*, ſo that where any Propoſition is falſe, there the coherence ceaſes, and all concluſions that follow it are abſurd, becauſe incoherent. But if I ſhould give you a *Catalogue* of his Circular arguings, incohe-

incoherences, contradictions, non-consequences, and all other violations of the *Lawes of Reasoning*, I must send you a Volumn as vast as his. And besides it would not be lesse fruitlesse then tedious, and might seem to aim at no other design, but meerly his disparagement. But yet that you may not suspect me of rashnesse in drawing up so big a charge against so eminent a person without being able to *back* it with a proportionable evidence, I suppose it will not be impertinent to give you a competent proof of it, if I can perform it without being tedious. Which may be done by proposing one instance and referring you to an Author, that will supply you with infinite more, if you think it worth the while to examine them. The Instance I shall give you, is the known and famous Argument for the Souls Immortality in his *Phædrus*. Πᾶσα ψυχὴ ἀθάνατον· τὸ γὰρ ἀεικίνητον, ἀθάνατον· τὸ δ' ἄλλο κινοῦν, καὶ ὑπ' ἄλλου κινούμενον, παῦλαν ἔχον κινήσεως, παῦλαν ἔχει ζωῆς· μόνον δὴ τὸ αὐτὸ κινοῦν, ἅτε οὐκ ἀπολεῖπον ἑαυτό, οὔποτε λήγει κινούμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται, τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως· ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀγένητον· ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ἀνάγκη πᾶν τὸ γιγνόμενον γίγνεσθαι, αὐτὸ δὲ μηδ' ἐξ ἑνός· οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐκ τοῦ ἀρχὴ γένοιτο, οὐκ ἂν ἐξ ἀρχῆς γίγνοιτ' ἔτι· νῦν δὲ ἀγένητόν δεῖ εἶναι· ἀνάγκη δή· ἀρχῆς γὰρ ἀπολειπούσης, οὔτε αὐτὸ ποτὲ ἂν τοῦ ὄντος ἄλλο ἐκ πάντων γένοιτο· οὐ γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς δεῖ τὰ πάντα γίγνεσθαι πάλιν δὲ κινήσεως μοῦνον ἀρχὴ, τὸ αὐτὸ κινοῦν· τοῦτο δ' οὔτ' ἀπόλλυσθαι, ἅτε γίγνεσθαι δυνατὸν· ἢ παντάπασι ἐκπεσοῦσα, πᾶσαν τὸν γιγνομένων συμπεσοῦσαν στάσιν μὴ-

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ποτε αὖθις ἔχειν· στῆναι ἄθεν κινεθέντα γενέσεται ἀθανάτου πεπαυμένου τοῦ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ κινουμένου, ψυχῆς οὐκ ἔστι κίνησις ἀλλ' ἐν τοῦτο αὐτοῦ τὸ ὄνομα ἐκ αἰσχυνεῖται. The sence of which words is fully and more plainly contained in this Analysis, *The Soul is always in motion; that which is always in motion, is self moving; that which is self-moving, is never deserted of it self; that which never deserts it self, never ceases to move; that which never ceases to move, is the source and origine of all motion; that which is the source of all motion has no beginning; and that which has no beginning can have no ending.* To omit that every Proposition is either false, or uncertain, or incoherent, as your self will easily observe, judge whether we are not likely to have a mighty proof of the Souls immortality, when it must be resolved into its own self-subsistence.

The Author I shall referre you to, is *Johannes Baptista Crispus* his *Quinarius Primus de Ethnicis Philosophis cautè Legendis.* 'Tis a Book of no small bulk, containing above 500 *pages in Folio*, and yet the main businesse of it is to display the defectivenesse of *Plato*'s arguings: Where you may be supplyed with infinite apparent and palpable instances thereof, if you will be at the pains to read and consider them. We might possibly have had a better *account* in *Theopompus* his Book κατὰ τῆς Πλάτονος διατριβῆς, of which thus *Athanaus* 11.15. Θεόπομπος ὁ χῖος ἐν

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τῷ κατὰ τῆς Πλάτονος διατριβῆς τοῦ πολλὰς τοῦ τῶν διαλόγων αὐτοῦ ἀχρείους καὶ ψυδεῖς ἄν τις εὕροι. Ἀλλοτρίους δὲ τοῦ πλείους ὄντας ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστίππου διατριβῶν, ἐνίους δὲ Ἀντισθένους, πολλὰς δὲ κἀκ τῶν Ἐρύσωνος τοῦ Ἡρακλεώτου. *Theopompus in his Book against the Platonick Discipline and Institution, maintains that a great many of Plato's Dialogues are trifling and false, and that many others of them are stoln out of the Discourses of Aristippus, or Antisthenes, or Bryson of Heraclea.*

After this brief account of *Plato's Logick*, I come now to his *Natural Philosophy*, in which I shall endeavour all possible brevity, because this part, as well as the former, doth not so directly concern my present design, the intendment of my charge being chiefly against his *Naturall Theology*. But that my Discourse may be entire in all its parts, and regular in its method, I shall to my account of his Logick cast in this of his Physiologie. Which will be sufficiently display'd and disparaged too, by telling you that in its main strokes it accords with the *Aristotelian Philosophy*; a parallel between them was asserted and demonstrated by *Ammonius*, *Porphyrie*, *Hierocles*, and others of the sacred succession among the Ancients, and among Modern Writers has been attempted by *Foxius*, *Carpentarius*, *Marronius*, *Buratellus*, & others. The retail of instances you may see in them, but he that tells you in gross that they agree

V. Phot. eclog. CCLI.

agree in one Principle, by which alone they ſolve all the appearances and productions of Nature, tells you all. For as *Ariſtotle* reſolves all *Phænomena* into his *Forms*, (which he ſtarts from the Boſome of matter) ſo *Plato* ſolves all by the *Soul of the Univerſe* and *Ideas*, (which in Greek are all one with *Forms*.) For the *Mechanical Hypotheſes* having been probably advanced to a conſiderable Grandeur by *Leucippus* and *Democritus* (of whom *Plato* makes not any mention in all his Writings) and other Ancient *Vertuoſi*, theſe two great and ambitious Wits, *Plato* and *Ariſtotle*, deſigning a Philoſophical Empire to themſelves ſcorn'd to be ſo meanly employ'd, as only to improve other mens principles, and therefore endeavoured to amuſe the World with new ones, which they knew others could as little confute, as themſelves could prove, by reaſon of their obſcurity and remoteneſſe from ſence. How little *Ariſtotle* intended his *Forms* ſhould be underſtood is already infinitely notorious, and how little mind *Plato* had that it ſhould be ever known what kind of Thing his *Univerſall Soul* is, is as notoriouſly apparent from his deſcriptions of it, which are nothing elſe but ſome odde fantaſtick Schemes of numericall figures and proportions, as you may ſee in both the *Timæus*'s; where 'tis highly pleaſant to read how ſeriouſly he preſcribes the

Method of its Compoſition out of numerical Ingredients. Take (ſaith he) all the numbers which make up Muſical proportions, as *Diapaſons*, *Diapente's*, *Diateſſerons*, and an infinite number more, but be eſpecially careful not to omit the double τετραπλᾶ, that which ariſes by even proportions, 1, 2, 4, 8, *&c.* and that whoſe proportions run into odde numbers, as 1, 3, 9, 27, *&c.* Mix and pound them together with all poſſible exactneſs, and if you find any void ſpaces between the even and odde numbers, fill them with the ſmalleſt κόμματα (which are ſome very fine and minute fragments) and when you have wrought all exceeding exactly into the ſhape of the Letter *I*, divide it in the middle long wayes into two equal parts, croſs them in the form of the Letter *X*, and be ſure to faſten them very ſtrongly at the Commiſſure, and then bow all four joynts, till at length you make them ſo pliable, as to bring them into a Spherical figure, and then 'tis brought to a right Animary Temper and Harmony. If this deſcription (to what ever purpoſe 'tis deſign'd) be not prodigiouſly ſilly and ridiculous, pray tell me what is. And yet this ſenſleſs inſignificant Jargon is made the ſole and intimate Princple of all *Natural Events*. All Motions, Generations, Corruptions, Alterations, Sympathies, Antipathies, the properties of bodies, the figure of the Heavens,

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the systeme of the Stars, the motions of the Planets, Eclipses, Comets, Meteors. The roundnesse of the Earth, the Flux and Reflux of the Sea, the Originall of Rivers and Fountaines, the Generation of Winds, Thunder, Lightning, Clouds, Rain, Haile, Snow, Ice, Dew, Petrification, the wonders of the Magnet, the Generation and Transmutation of Metals, the Powers and Specifick Vertues of Plants, the Variety of Animals, their Origine, their Shapes, their Nutrition, their Faculties, The Qualities of the Elements, Heat, Cold, Gravity, Levity, Fluidity, Firmnesse, Rarity, Density, Perspicuity, Opacity, Hebetude, Subtility, Smoothnesse, Asperity, Hardnesse, Softnesse, Stubbornesse, Flexibility, Light, Colours, Sounds, Tasts, Smells, and all other Phænomena of Nature are only so many Tricks of this Magical kind of Soul. If I could have satisfied my self it had been to any purpose, I should have given you an account of his enormous absurdities in all the forementioned particulars, as they are discoursed of in his *Timæus*, which containes the whole Body of his Naturall Philosophy. But I shall beg your leave to dismisse this Theme, partly because none have more professedly disclaimed the *Platonick Physiology*, then they that stickle most for his other whimsies, partly because the *Aristotelian* Phylosophy

having been of late ſo ſhamefully baſled, this which agrees ſo much with it in its main Principles, and more in its Genius, muſt of nececeſſity periſh together with it, and ſo will as little need as deſerve any particular confutation; partly becauſe their *Phyſiologie* is well nigh purely *Theologicall*; The *Platoniſts* alwayes Treating of τὰ ἐναργῶς φυσικὰ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ θεολογικῶς, as *Proclus* obſerves; ſo that in ventilating and ſifting their *Theologie*, I muſt alſo of neceſſity diſcuſſe their Natural Philoſophie, which is every where ſo intimately mingled with it; but chiefly becauſe I am lately grown ſuch a deſpairing *Sceptick* in all *Phyſiologicall Theories*, that I cannot concern my ſelf in the Truth or Falſhood of any *Hypotheſes*. For though I preferre the Mechanicall Hypotheſes before any other, yet me thinks their contexture is too ſlight and brittle to have any ſtreſſe laid upon them; and I can reſemble them to nothing better then your *Glaſſe drops*, from which, if the leaſt portion be broken, the whole *Compages* immediately diſſolves and ſhatters into Duſt and Atoms; for their parts, which rather lie then hang together, being ſupported only by the thin filme of a brittle Conjecture (not anneal'd by experience and obſervation) if that fail any where, the whole Syſteme of the Hypotheſis unavoidably ſhatters: And how eaſie a thing it is to ſpoil the prettieſt conjecture,

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is obvious to the moſt vulgar obſerver. The chief reaſon therefore, why I preferre the Mechanicall and Experimentall Philoſophie before the *Ariſtotelean*, is not ſo much becauſe of its much greater certainty, but becauſe it puts inquiſitive men into a method to attain it, whereas the other ſerves only to obſtruct their induſtry by amuſing them with empty and inſignificant Notions. And therefore we may rationally expect a greater Improvement of Natural Philoſophie from the *Royall Society*, (if they purſue their deſign) then it has had in all former ages; for they having diſcarded all particular *Hypotheſes*, and wholly addicted themſelves to exact Experiments and Obſervations, they may not only furniſh the World with a compleat *Hiſtory of Nature*, (which is the moſt uſeful part of *Phyſiologie*) but alſo lay firm and ſolid foundations to erect *Hypotheſes* upon, (though perhaps that muſt be the work of future Ages:) at leaſt we ſhall ſee whether it be poſſible to frame any certain *Hypotheſes* or no, which is the thing I moſt doubt of, becauſe, though the *Experiments* be exact and certain, yet their Application to any *Hypotheſes* is doubtfull and uncertain; ſo that though the *Hypotheſis* may have a firm *Baſis* to bottome upon, yet it can be faſtned and cemented to it no other way, but by conjecture and uncertaine (though probable) applications,

and therefore I doubt not but we muſt at laſt reſt ſatisfied with true and exact Hiſtories of Nature for uſe and practice; and with the handſomeſt and moſt probable *Hypotheſes* for delight and Ornament.

And now I paſſe over to the main deſign of theſe Papers, which is to give an account of the *Platonick Theologie*: The *Civill Part* whereof, *viz.* That which concernes their *Publick Worſhip*, I ſhall omit. For all the Religious Obſervations of their Country being trifling, obſcene, or inhumane, their temporiſing Conformity to them, ſtands upon Record as one of their greateſt Blemiſhes: Though it muſt be confeſſed that the *Platoniſts* were of all men the greateſt Refiners and Improvers of *Heleniſme*; inſtead of rude and barbarous Uſages, introducing civill and more modeſt Ceremonies. And yet the latter *Platoniſts*, or *ſecond Schoole of Plato*, degenerated into the baſeſt and fouleſt Superſtition, being the greateſt Patrons of *Theurgical Rites* and *Magicall Arts*, or rather *jugling Tricks*, (for what ever they were, they could be no better) eſpecially thoſe of them that did moſt *Pythagorize*, As *Apollonius Tyanæus*, that grand ſtickler for *Ethniciſme*; *Iamblicus*, one of their Famouſeſt *Devote's*; *Julianus* the *Syrian*, Sirnamed *Theurgus*, from his Eminent knowledge and agility in *Magicall Tricks*, were great Zelots for the *Pythagorean*

rean Philoſophy. But if you looke into *Eunapius*, you will ſee, that not only theſe, but the *Emperour Julian*, *Porphyrie*, *Maximus*, *Libanius*, *Amelius*, *Sopater*, *Ædeſius*, *Chryſanthius*, and others were Zealous Aſſerters of this Magicall kind of Jugling, chiefly (as 'tis ſuppoſed) to confront the Chriſtian Religion, and the Miracles on which it ſtood. But I forbeare to proſecute this Theme, my intention being not to diſcourſe of their publick and politicall actions, but onely of their private ſentiments.

Their Theologie then conſiſted of two parts; *Practicall*, or that which concernes Theologicall Vertues; & *Speculative*, or that which concernes ſpeculations about Theological matters. Which two parts integrate a Body of Divinity not unlike to that of King *Ptolomies* man in *Lucian*, who was one halfe perfectly black, and the other exceeding white; ſo that part of their Theologie, which relates to practice, is eminently cleare and perſpicuous, whilſt that which is imployed in Theorie and Contemplation is monſtrouſly darke and obſcure. This latter I ſhall endeavour to evince more largely in the ſequell of my diſcourſe; but for a briefe evidence of the firſt, take this ſhort Catalogue of their Sentiments concerning Religion, which are ſuch as theſe.

Platonick Religion

Its main design is to perfect and dignifie humane Nature, 'tis consonant to our Natural Reasons, complies with our Natural Necessities, relieves our Natural Wants. It consists in living up to our Faculties, and acting as becomes Rational Beings; In clearing the Soul from prejudices and prepossessions, and pursuing Truth with an honest and impartial Simplicity: In following the Conduct of Reason, and being confident in its Guidance, seeing the Condition of him that does so is as secure, as 'tis certain that *Infinite Goodnesse* cannot be angry with him, that has endeavour'd with all faithfulnesse and diligence to know and do his Duty. It resides in the Minde and Spirit, not in Customes and bare Ceremonies. It is Free and Ingenuous, not Slavish and Troublesome, because it flowes from a true Love of God and Goodnesse. It is truly Noble and Generous, and requires of us to act suitably to the Dignity of rational Beings, to keep up the Splendour and Grandeur of our Natures, and to scorn any Action that's unhandsome, or unworthy our Station and Quality: It commands us onely to live like Men, and forbids us nothing but what makes us Brutes or Devils. It teaches us to imitate and resemble the Divine Perfections, to be God-like in Wisdome, and Justice, and Goodnesse, in Meeknesse, and

and Pity, and Clemency, in Kindneſſe and Patience, in forgiving Injuries, and Pardoning Enemies, in doing hurt to no Man, and doing good to every Man. It interdicts us not any Innocent Delights, but onely reſtrains the Extravagancies of our Paſſions and Appetites. It is the moſt conducive Inſtrument in the world to the pleaſures of both Mind and Body; Infelicities (though Providence were baniſh't the World) being the *Spontaneous Iſſues* of Vile Practices; and Sin the *Natural Womb* of Puniſhment; it therefore permits (unleſſe in ſome ſpecial contingencies) all Corporeall Pleaſures, as farre as they are healthfull and pleaſant, and debars us of no delights, but thoſe that are deſtructive of the *Tranquillity* of our Minds, or *Indolency* of our Bodies. It produces a ſweet and gracious temper of Mind, that cauſes an univerſal benevolence and kindneſſe to Mankind. It makes us Affable, Humble, Courteous, Charitable, Moderate, Prudent, Unpaſſionate. It conſiſts of Love, Candour, Ingenuity, Clemency, Patience, Mildneſſe, and all other Inſtances of Good-Nature. It deteſts nothing more then a Peeviſh, Froward, Moroſe, Uncivil, Paſſionate, Furious, Talkative, Fanatick Zeal. It begets a true Liberty and Freedome of Spirit. It Exempts us from all effeminate Feares and Scruples, and begets the greateſt

Serenity

Serenity and Cheerfulneſſe of Mind. It inſtructs us to dread no Evil from God, but to look upon Him as an infinitely Gracious and Benigne Being, that deſigns nothing more then the happineſſe and perfection of his Creatures; that Tranſacts with Mankind by gentle and Paternal Meaſures, and that is ſo far from tying upon us Niceties and Scruples, that he pities our Infirmities, and bids us to concern our ſelves onely about plain and palpable Duties. It is the moſt ſpritely and vivacious thing in the world, driving away all ſad and gloomy Melancholly, begetting in us a firm and rational Confidence, and the ineffable joyes of a good Conſcience. It advances the Soul to its Juſt Power and Dominion, and enables it to govern all Corporeal Appetites, and therefore enjoyns us above all things to ſhun Intemperance, not only for its own Intrinſick Baſeneſſe, but for its miſcheivous Effects; becauſe it naturally ſo debauches and dulls our Reaſons, as to diſable them for all good and virtuous Actions. For Religion is pure, cleanly and ſpiritual; but an intemperate ſenſuality is naſty, ſottiſh, and makes the mind of man cheap and fooliſh, and unapt for any thing that is Manly, Generous, and Rational, and ſo is the greateſt Impediment to all the ends and Exerciſes of Religion, which directly tends to the enobling of our Natures, the fortifying

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of our Reaſons, the ſubduing of all our lower and ſottiſh Appetites, the advancing of our manly and intellectual Abilities, in any thing that renders us leſſe like Beaſts, and more like men. But as for Intemperance, that does by a natural neceſſity beſot and weaken the vigour of our Reaſons, and ſo directly thwart all the ends of Religion, for it either ſtupifies or enrages our Spirits, either ſtuffing our Bodies with dull, watry, and flatulent humours, or putting their Ferments into irregular and extravagant motions. I have often known a rude, wild, diſſolute, cholerick, ungovernable Spirit enter into perſons (otherwiſe of a well inclin'd Complexion) by no other way then a wide and devouring Throat. To conclude, our work in this World is to ſee that the Ἀνθρωπος maintain its own Authority againſt all the aſſaults of rude and barbarous Paſſions, that it tame and civilize that wild and ſalvage *Beaſt*, to which Providence has tyed it, that by a compleat Victory over all ignoble and unhandſome motions of the brutiſh Faculties, it may be in a manner reſtored to the condition of a pure and intellectual Being; and ſo be capacitated to reliſh the joyes proper to God and Spiritual Natures, for we are not capable of that degree of Felicity which they enjoy, till our Souls are rendred ſo by proportionate degrees of Purity and Holi-

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neſſe; for the happineſſe of Heaven is pure and intellectual, and therefore our minds are purged here from all feculencies of matter, that they may be fitted and qualified to reliſh its Enjoyments; ſo that when the vigorous Energy of the Soul has melted down all the droſſy parts of ſluggiſh and unweildy matter, and is become θεοειδὴς, *God-like, and purely ſpiritual*, then it ſhall mount up into the Regions of Bliſs and Happineſs, and ſhall be admitted into an intimate converſe and union with the Divine Nature, and ſhall live in the Raviſhing Contemplations and Embracings of uncreated Beauty, and bathe its dilated Faculties in the full ſtreams of Infinite Goodneſſe, and Sun it ſelf in the Invigorating Beams of Light and Love, and ſpend a whole Eternity in the bliſsful Acts of Love, and Joy, and Peace, and every thing that can procure or increaſe its happineſſe. By all which, you eaſily diſcern that Religion is no Arbitrary Exaction, but Wiſe and Rational, and of natural neceſſity to perfect and refine our Natures, to raiſe and purifie our Minds, to prepare and fit us for a higher and more Divine Condition, the Soul being not capable or fit without it to enjoy the pleaſures of God and Heaven.

And now I deſcend to their Speculative or Metaphyſical Theology, which the *Platoniſts*

niſts ſtile Divine; The *Peripateticks Primitive Philoſophy*; and include in it that which they call *Sapience* or *Metaphyſicks*; ſo that I ſhall not confine my ſelf to matters meerly Theological, but ſhall take in all the general Principles of Science; eſpecially becauſe I do not intend a purſuit of all particular Diſputes, (for that would be an endleſs undertaking) but only ſome ſuch General Exceptions, as though they may have a more direct aſpect on *Metaphyſical Speculations*, yet may concern their Philoſophy in groſſe, and caſt an oblique look upon all its other parts: This premiſed, I proceed

1. The firſt thing therefore, againſt which I except, is their way of reſolving knowledge into its *firſt and fundamental Principles*; in that by rejecting the Teſtimony and Judgment of ſenſe in matters of Philoſophy, they do but involve and perplex the Principles thereof, under the pretext of a more abſtracted and intellectual diſcovery of things: For hereby the minds of men are taken off from the *native Evidence* of plain and palpable Truths, and are fain to ground all their knowledge upon nice and ſubtle Speculations, whereby, at leaſt, clear and unqueſtionable *Truths* are reſolved into *Principles* infinitely more uncertain and diſputable then themſelves. And that the *Platonick* way of reſolving know-

knowledge is juſtly chargeable herewith, needs no other proof then barely to repreſent it. They then ſuppoſe that the Truth of all Beings conſiſts in a conformity to their *Archetypal Ideas*, whereby they mean ſome *General Patterns*, by which all the *Individuals* of each *ſpecies* are framed, ſo that to inveſtigate the Nature of things, we muſt endeavour to know the Reſemblance they have to their *Originals*; and that therefore to reflect upon theſe, and to conſider their agreement with ſenſible things, is the only way to attain a certain knowledge of the Natures of the things themſelves. And therefore *Plato* concludes the Omniſcience of the *firſt Mind*, from the ſuppoſition that it is furniſhed with the *Ideas* of all things. And that Mankind might be in a capacity of knowing the Natures of things, he aſſerts that God has hang'd a multitude of theſe little *Pictures* of himſelf and all his creatures in every man's underſtanding, that by attending to them, he might direct himſelf in his Conceptions and Notions of the things themſelves; and that herein alone conſiſts the Nature of true Science; and therefore the only difference he aſſignes between Science and Opinion, is, that the one attends to theſe unchangeable Ideas, but the other to the uncertain and variable Reports of ſenſe. And in another place

In Timæo.

In Epiſt. ad Dionis amicos.

place, diſcourſing more particularly of this Notion; to the Science of a thing he requires a threefold knowledge, *viz.* of its Name, of its Definition, and of its Picture, which laſt he aſſerts to be the chief cauſe of knowledge, and inſtances in a Circle, to the true Science whereof, 'tis neceſſary that we know by what name to expreſſe it, and then its Definition, that 'tis a figure, whoſe parts are every where equally diſtant from the Center; and laſtly, that it be repreſented to us by ſome viſible Diagram; which, ſayes he, gives us a far more ſolid knowledge of the nature of a Circle then the other two; and is that which advances our knowledge from Opinion to Science: Now (continues he) the ſame uſe that theſe delineations have in *Mathematical Theories*, Idea's have in *Phyſical Speculations*, as therefore we beſt underſtand what a Circle is by looking upon its Delineated Figure, ſo the ſureſt knowledge we can have of the Natures of things, is gotten by contemplating their Ideal Pictures or Images engraven on our underſtandings.

But firſt, methinks, this fetching of Principles and *Proleptick Notions* out of the mind of Man, is the ſame thing, as to anatomize the eye to ſearch for the firſt Principles and *Poſtulata* of Opticks: For as 'tis the Nature and Office of the Eye to contemplate and obſerve thoſe objects with which tis preſented, and thence

thence to frame Optical Rules and Maximes, ſo 'tis of the mind to ſpeculate and conſider thoſe things, which are any way conveyed to its notice, and thence to make general Rules and Obſervations, which after an exact ſcrutiny and compariſon of every individual, are juſtly admitted for Proleptick and fundamental Verities: ſo that *general Axiomes* are onely the reſults and abridgments of a multitude of ſingle Experiments; thus from the plain experience and obſervation of all man-kind was framed that unqueſtionable Maxime, *That the whole is greater then its parts*, becauſe they ſaw and found it was ſo in all individual Bodies in the world, and the reaſon why all men aſſent to it at the firſt propoſal, is becauſe they cannot look abroad, but they are preſented with innumerable inſtances thereof, every viſible thing in the world being a *whole* compounded of parts ſenſibly ſmaller then it ſelf. Now to what purpoſe ſhould Providence imprint ſuch obvious and apparent Notices as this upon the minds of Men, when as but to open our eyes, is enough to diſcover their undoubted Truth and Evidence? A man that has animadverſive Faculties; has as little need to be minded of ſuch obvious and apparent Certainties, as a man that has his Eyes in his head, has to be taught that there is a Sun in the Heavens. But ſuppoſe that we were born with

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theſe congenite Anticipations, and that they take Root in our very Faculties, yet how can I be certaine of their Truth and Veracity? For 'tis not impoſſible but the ſeeds of Error might have beene the naturall Reſults of my Faculties, as Weeds are the firſt and naturall Iſſues of the beſt Soyles, how then ſhall we be ſure that theſe ſpontaneous Notions are not falſe and ſpurious? Now the only way to be fully ſatisfied of their Truth and Sincerity, is to examine them by a wary and diſcreet Experience, the Teſt whereof will remove all ground to doubt for the future of their Integrity. And if ſo, to what purpoſe do *Connate Principles* ſerve, for before I have made Tryall, I cannot uſe them, becauſe I have no Reaſon to truſt them, till I can be certaine of their Veracity; which I cannot be, but by Experience; which yet makes them uſeleſſe, becauſe Experimentall knowledge is of all others the ſafeſt and moſt unqueſtionable, and therefore muſt needs render all leſſer evidence vaine and unneceſſary. At leaſt when our knowledge proceeds in an Empiricall way 'tis ſolid and palpable, and made ſo unqueſtionably certain from the plain and moſt undoubted Teſtimony of Senſe and Experience, as undeniably to convince *Scepticiſme* of a pitiful & ridiculous Obſtinacy. But when we begin our knowledge from Notions within our ſelves,

beſides that 'tis a difficult and nice diſpute to prove that the mind of man is furniſhed with any ſuch innate *Prolepſes*, and that we are deſtitute of any ſure *criterion* to diſcerne Naturall Anticipations from Preconceptions of Cuſtome and Education (unleſſe we bring them to the Touchſtone of Experience) 'tis doubtleſſe that Generalities are not capable of ſo palpable and convictive an Evidence, as ſingle and particular Obſervations. And therefore my Lord *Advancement of Learning l. 1. c. 5.* the leaſt obſtructious to the Advancement of knowledge that *men have ſought for Truth in their owne little Worlds, and that withdrawing themſelves from the Contemplation of Nature, and the Obſervations of Experience, they have tumbled upon downe in their owne Speculations and Conceits, and ſo have by continuall meditation and agitation of Wit urged, and as it were invocated their owne Spirits to Divine, and give Oracles unto them, whereby they have been deſervedly and pleaſingly deluded.*

But ſecondly, however the caſe may be as to other Innate Notions, the Exiſtence of *Plato's Ideas* is altogether precarious and uncertaine, and therefore abſolutely unfit to be made the foundation of all Science, for by them they unanimouſly underſtand reall Pictures and Images of things, painted and carved upon

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the Mind, rather then Habits, Thoughts, or Conceptions, and therefore *Plato* defines them to be εἰκώνες καὶ ὁμοιώματα πραγμάτων, which further appeares from the grounds from whence they labour to deduce them; for it is evident, say they, that the *Eternall Mind* exerted Intellectuall Actions from all Eternity, but because there can be no Intellection without an *Intelligible Object*, it must follow, that there must be *Exemplars* and *Ideal Objects* in the Divine Minde, to terminate the actions thereof. But to suppose that the understanding cannot act, unlesse it be employed about an object really existing, is not onely precarious, but for any thing appeares to the contrary, contrary to every mans Experience, seeing we are all able to create *Chimæra*'s at pleasure. But though this *Postulatum* were granted as to created Intellects, yet to tie and limit the Contemplations of the *Divine Mind* to a pre-existent object, is (beside many other absurdities) not lesse rash and unwarrantable then to confine the operations of Omnipotence to the Lawes of Matter and Motion: seeing then there's no tollerable Evidence to be produced of the Truth and Reality of these *Mentall Images*, what can more betray the cause of Science to the Exceptions of *Scepticks*, then to resolve its utmost Truth and Evidence into such uncertaine and imaginary Principles?

2. A ſecond Fault, for which they are juſtly blameable, is their ſerious endeavouring to know and define the Notions of abſtracted Eſſences; for theſe pure and Seraphick Intellectualiſts forſooth deſpiſe all ſenſible knowledge, as too groſſe and materiall for their nice and curious Faculties, and diſdain to purſue any Science, but what is pure and Intellectual, that is ſuch as is ſuitable to their refin'd, and as it were, ſeparated Underſtandings; and therefore they chiefly employ their Thoughts about abſtracted and purely Metaphyſicall Beings; and thence they take upon them exactly to deſcribe the meer *Eſſences* of all ſorts of Beings, whether Materiall or Immateriall; whether they belong to the intellectuall, or to the ſenſible World: In order whereto, they reſolve all Beings into their ſimple and unmixt Ingredients, and then attempt to aſſigne their preciſe Notions and Differences from each other. Thus they Analize all Phyſicall Bodies into ten Principles or Primitive Ingredients; for firſt, they ſuppoſing that all things, by how much the leſſe perfect they are, are ſo much the more compounded, and then placing Bodies in the loweſt ranck of Beings, they inferre that ſomething of all Superiour Eſſences muſt concur to their Conſtitution, ſo that all Bodies muſt participate of the nine Superiour Orders of Beings,

Beings, *viz. Form, Quality, Nature, Soul, Mind, Life, Eſſence, Unity, One*, from the mixture of which, after the four ſeveral wayes of Compoſition, *i.e.* of Profundity, Latitude, Longitude, and Solidity reſults Corporeity. And ſome are ſo ſtrangely ſubtle and abſtractive, as to make a real & ſubſtantial difference between Matter and Body. Again, to paſs by their ſeveral kinds of immaterial Motion and Harmony, they make five ſorts of Numbers, *Divine*, whoſe Property is Uniformity; *Subſtantial*, whoſe Property is Immobility; *Animary*, whoſe Property is a Power of Self-moving; *Natural*, whoſe Property is a Capacity to be moved; *Mathematical*, which is the common ſort, and the groſſeſt of all, becauſe (ſay they) it may be deciphred by External Figures. But if they are able to frame a Conception of any Number, beſides that which is Mathematical, they have more faculties then I, who am born but a Man, and live by the uſe of my Reaſon, and five Senſes.

See Patricius's *Panarchia*, eſpecially the eleventh Book.

And yet they confidently enough aſſay to give the world minute deſcriptions of theſe, and ſuch other nice and ſubtle Eſſences. It will be unneceſſary to examine their particular performances, if I can evidently Convict the Attempt it ſelf of Folly and Madneſs, as I preſume to you I eaſily can, becauſe I know

you are already ſufficiently convinced how fruitleſſe and inſignificant theſe definitions of Metaphyſical and abſtracted Eſſences are, for they are in truth nothing elſe but notifying that thing by more words of a narrower ſignification, which at other times is ſignified by a ſingle one of a larger Import, as if in Arithmetical Accounts, we ſhould denote one greater ſumme by many little ones. But the expreſſing of a thing by divers words, does not more unfold its Nature, then when 'tis ſigned by one; becauſe the uſe of Words is not to explaine the Natures of Things, but only to ſtand as marks and ſignes in their ſtead, as Arithmetical figures are onely notes of Numbers; and therefore Names are as unable to explaine abſtracted Natures, as figures are to ſolve *Arithmetical Problems*. I am not ignorant that it has been an ancient and creditable Opinion of the *Platoniſts*, that Names have in them a natu al reſemblance and ſuitableneſs to things, and are peculiarly expreſſive of the ſeveral natures and properties of thoſe things they are uſed to repreſent. But words being meerly ſeveral Modifications of ſound made by the Organs of Speech, can have no likeneſs to any thing but ſounds; and where a word ſignifies any peculiar ſound, it may have a natural reſemblance to it, by giving it a ſound like that which it repreſents, as *Tintinnabulum*

nabulum and *Clanger*, which words ſtrike the *Organs* of hearing ſomewhat after the ſame manner, as thoſe things do, of which they are expreſſive. But to imagine that any words ſhould carry in them a reſemblance to any things beſides Noiſes, is an abſurd and groundleſſe conceit; which will evidently appear by impoſing upon words contrary ſignifications, and applying them to expreſſe things quite contrary to what they now ſignifie. For Example, take the Names, by which *Fire* is expreſſed in all Languages, and apply them to *water*; and ſo on the contrary, call *Water* by the names of *Fire*, and you will eaſily perceive they have no more natural Correſpondency to the one then to the other, and that the Names of Fire have as much agreement with the Nature and Properties of water, as they have with the thing they now ſignifie, and that they would as well expreſſe it, if men would agree to change their Impoſition.

And therefore I conclude that the office of Definitions is not to explain the Natures of things, but to fix and circumſcribe the ſignification of Words; for they being Notes of things, unleſſe their ſignifications be ſetled, their meaning muſt needs be Equivocal and uncertain, that is, unleſſe it be determined of what things ſuch particular Names are ſigns, no man ſhall be able to ſignify his Thoughts

to another, because he will use uncertain signs. And therefore to define Matter, Form, Substance, Accident, is not to unfold the Intrinsick nature of those things, of which the names of *Matter*, *Form*, *Substance*, *Accident* are marks & signs, but only to define what things I intend to express and signifie by these Names. And unless I have some Idea and knowledge of that thing which I call Form or Accident, Antecedently to my denoting of it by these Names, they will be altogether insignificant, because I know not what thing 'tis which they signifie, and the Names themselves give me no more knowledge of those things, then *Gas* and *Blas* or any other words of no defined signification. All which I hope sufficiently evinces the vanity of Metaphysical definitions in order to the discovering the hidden Essences of things. But yet further, we are so far from attaining any certain and real knowledge of *Incorporeal Beings* (of an acquaintance with which, these *Visionists* so much boast) that we are not able to know any thing of *Corporeal Substances* as abstract from their Accidents. There's nothing can more perplex my Faculties, then the simple *Idea* of naked matter. And certainly, it was never intended that meer Essences should be the Objects of our Faculties. And therefore the truly wise and discerning Philosophers do not endeavour after the dry and sapless know

knowledge of abſtracted Natures, but onely ſearch after the Properties, Qualities, Vertues and Operations of Natural Beings, the knowledge whereof may be acquired by Obſervations and Experiments, but there are no certain means or rational Methods (that I could ever yet meet with) to inveſtigate the myſterious Ideas of bare and abſtracted Eſſences. Beſides, all Beings are either Objects of ſence, or not; now to go about to diſcover the nature of the former by Metaphyſical definitions, would be ridiculous, ſeeing they are far better underſtood by our ſenſes. If any one ſhould ask me, what a Bed-ſtaff or a Joint-ſtool is, the onely way to acquaint him what they are, is not to amuſe him with fine artificial definitions, but to ſhew him the things themſelves: And beſides to abſtract ſenſible things from materiality, is to abſtract them from themſelves, becauſe their very Eſſences are Material. And then of them that take upon them to deſcribe the Natures of Beings that are not obnoxious to ſence, I demand by what wayes and methods they came to that knowledg. For tis not enough to prove that this or that is the Idea of any thing, becauſe ſome fanciful men are able to make pretty *Hypotheſes* concerning it, but if any man have attain'd any certain knowledg thereof, he is able to give a rational account of the way

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and method, by which he proceeded in his Enquiry. But this these bold definers neither have, nor can do; but if you will be so civil as to take their words, they will requite your Civility by acquainting you with more strange and stupendious Mysteries. And here (before I conclude this head) I cannot but proclaim a Quarrel against the Metaphysicks of the *School-Doctors*, who pretend too by their definitions to unfold the most hidden and abstracted Essences of Things. But their performance is a pregnant Argument of the vanity of their undertaking. For their Vast Volumns are filled with well nigh nothing, but empty and insignificant words, frivolous and confus'd distinctions, useless and imaginary notions, precarious and uncertain suppositions, senceless and unintelligible Discourses, and with a deal of such phantastick and uncouth stuff, as makes Fools stare, and Wise men laugh: But the Intrinsick Essence of any one Being is no more explain'd & unsecreted after all their Labour, then it was afore. This, *Sir*, you may understand as a recantation of my Errour, or rather bemoaning my unhappiness, in that I have (contrary to what you once advised me) lost so much time and industry in these absurd and senceless Authors. And though this be onely to accuse, yet 'tis as easie a task to make good my charge to the utmost, as 'tis

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to make it, but that, becauſe it cannot be done unleſſe by an induction of particular inſtances, would require a larger Diſcourſe then can be allowed to a Digreſſion in this Letter.

3. My Third Impeachment, is their affecting a myſterious obſcurity and abſtruſeneſſe, thereby to render their notions more ſolemn and venerable. Of this I might produce you infinite Inſtances: But for a full conviction, let me only engage you to ſpend one hour either in *Plato*'s *Parmenides* (which though *Proclus* thinks an entire and exact Syſteme of Platonick Divinity, yet himſelfe waſts ſeveral Chapters in an Enquiry after the ſcope and deſigne of that Dialogue) or any of thoſe of his Theologicall Commentators, whom they will allow to have underſtood him, (for *Patricius* will not allow that his firſt Gloſſers to the number of above 75 were able to reach his meaning) but cheifly *Proclus his 6 Books upon Plato*'s *Theologie*, or for brevity ſake his *Theologicall Inſtitutions* annexed to them. Of the Obſcurity and Ambiguity of *Plato*'s ſentiments concerning the *Deity*, I have treated you know where, and therefore thither I referre you, only let me *note*, that when *Cardinal Beſſarion* profeſſes to give us a brief and ſummary account of *Plato*'s notion

In Plat. Theol. lib. 1. *cap.* 7, 8, 9, 10, *&c.*

In his Plato Exotericus.

Adv. Calum. l. 2. c. 3. the paſſage is ſomewhat too tedious to tranſcribe.

tion of God in his *Parmenides*, he amasses together (as their manner is) a *Cento* of flat *contradictions*, and gives a Description much like that Peripatetick Riddle of matter, *Ælia Lælia Crispis, nec Mas, nec Fœmina, nec Androgyna, nec casta, nec meretrix, nec pudica, sed omnia*, and then applauds both himself and *Plato* for their *Orthodox* sentiments about the Deity. Just such another senselesse *Jargon* is that supposititious piece of *Dionysius the Areopagite, de Divinis Nominibus*. Again is it not a wild kind of speculative fanaticisme to explain the unaccountable Ideas of immaterial Beings, by numbers and figures, of which I have already given you a sufficient Instance? But if I should transcribe their pretty dreams and conceits of the *superessential Unity*, of the *Divine Orders* and *Oeconomyes*, of the νοὲς ἀπ-κόσμοι καὶ ἀπουράνοι, of the *Paternum Profundum*, *Jynges*, *Teletarchæ*, *Fontani Patres*, of the *Field of Truth*, the *Super-celestial Regions* and *Invisible Heavens*, together with the descriptions of their several Inhabitants, and of all other *Intellectual Hypostases*, I am confident it would *tempt* your *gravity* (though you were Stoically morose) much beyond the essay of a smile, unlesse perhaps your perusal of *Jacob Behem* may have prevented their novelty.

But the Græcian Theology (as *Proclus* contends) being founded by *Orpheus*, *Plat. Theol. l. 1. c. 5.*

pheus, advanced by *Pythagoras*, and compleated by *Plato*; as *Orpheus* represented his mysteries by Tales and Fables, *Pythagoras* by Numbers and Symbols, so *Plato* and his Followers have (in imitation of them) communicated their Notions by Emblems, Fables, Symbols, Parables, heaps of Metaphors, Allegories, and all sorts of Mysticall Representations (as is vulgarly known.) All which upon the account of their Obscurity and Ambiguity are apparently the unfitteſt signes in the world to expresse the Train of any mans thoughts to another: For besides that they carry in them no Intelligible Affinity to the Notices, which they were design'd to intimate, the Powers of Imagination are so great, and the Instances in which one thing may resemble another are so many, that there is scarce any thing in nature, in which the Fancie cannot find or make a Varietie of such Symbolising Resemblances, so that Emblems, Fables, Symbols, Allegories, though they are prettie *Poetick Fancies*, are infinitely unfit to expresse Philosophical Notions and discoveries of the Natures of things: and besides, seeing they have left us no key to these dark *Cyphers*, there can be no sure and constant way to unriddle what conceptions are lock'd up under them; so that it does not onely require a great deal of pains to frame conjectures of their meaning,

See *Proclus in Platon. Theol. lib.* 1. *c.* 4.

meaning, but the ſureſt we can pitch upon are withall ſo uncertain and ambiguous, that they unavoidably leave us fluctuating in meer uncertainties. And what wiſe man will take ſo much pains for ſuch a knowledge that can at higheſt amount but to a doubtfull gueſſe? The truth of it is, they have by theſe Exorbitances been highly injurious to the advancement of true and ſolid Philoſophie; for it needs little leſſe pains to diſcover their meaning, then perhaps it would to have examined the thing it ſelf, and yet when that is done, we are as far from our end as before. The end of Philoſophie is to ſearch into and diſcover the Nature of things, but I believe you underſtand not how the Nature of any thing is at all diſcovered, by making it the Theme of Allegorical and dark diſcourſes.

But I muſt not too much aggravate this Accuſation upon the *Platoniſts* in particular, ſeeing it has been the Catholick Crime of all the Learned World. The *Monk of Viterbo* in his Counterfeit *Beroſus* derives this Art of wraping up and unfolding Myſteries at the ſame time from *Noah*, but perhaps another man would have fetch't its Invention from the *Oracular Devils*, who taking upon them to foretel, what they could not foreknow, were forced to uſe ſuch ſhifts to hide their Ignorance.

Ambage

Ambage nova delphica mos est Deo
Arcana tegere.

And from hence they who affected a Title of Wisdome imitated their Oracles, and because they undertook to explain those secrets, which were above the reach of their Inquisition, that they might not discover their ignorance instead of their knowledge, they wrapt up their Mysteries in dark and ænigmatical Representations, as being too Sacred and Venerable (as they pretended) to be prostituted to vulgar and unhallowed Minds. *Clemens Alexandrinus* roundly charges almost every Sect of the Philosophers herewith. * Only *Epicurus* took the word [illegible] *Perspicuity* for his Motto, whereas the rest generally disclaimed it. The story is common, that *Hipparchus* was banished *Pythagoras* his School, and a [illegible] set in his place, as of a Person lost, and all because he went [illegible] about to unriddle the *Pythagorick Arbor* [illegible] neither is *Heraclitus* his Sirname [illegible] because of the obscurity of his Writings lesse famous, *Clarus ob obscurum lingua magis interinanes*, as *Lucretius* quibbles upon him, and *Laertius* relates of him in his life, That he Wrote a Book so monstrouly obscure, that at length it became a Controversie, whether it treated of a *Common-wealth*, or of *Nature*. And no less common is *Aristotles*

Stromat. l. 5.

* Laert. in his life.

Epistle

Epistle to *Alexander*, wherein he professes that though he had made his Books publick, yet he had not published them, and therefore he divides his Writings into *Exotericks*, that were Intelligible to Vulgar Readers, and *Eisotericks*, that were Intelligible to none but Sons of Art; whence *Atticus* in *Eusebius* compares him to the Cuttle-Fish, because he like that sort of Fish, hides himself with his own Ink. And how well the School-Doctors (his great Admirers) have imitated him, I need not tell you, onely I have more then once with pleasure observ'd it of *Ægidius*, that where he cannot make his Master *Aquinas* speak good sense, (though the Non-sense be palpable) he attributes a Mysteriousnesse to his extraordinary and more then humane subtletie. Shall I adde the proud Race of *Spagyrists*, who (like *Æneas*) go cloathed in clouds, and what they discover by their fire, darken by their smoak? I might adde many modern Writers, but I forbear, only methinks all the World seem to have gone to School to that Pedagogue in Quintilian, *Qui discipulos obscurare quæ dicerent, juberet, græco verbo utens* σκοτεινον. All Writers are ambitious to have Commentators and certainly 'tis not a little estimation that obscurity gains, from the Vulgar, whence that commendation in *Quintilian*, *Tanto melior*,

ἐκδεδομένα καὶ μὴ ἐκδεδομένα. *Plut.* in *Alex.*

Institut. l. 8 c. 2.

lior, ne ego quidem intellexi; and that conclusion in *Lucretius*.

Omnia enim stolidi magis admirantur amantq;
Inversis quæ sub verbis Latitantia cernunt.

But all that they understand, they despise τὸ δ' ῥᾷστον καταγελάσεται ὁ δῆμος, saies *Synesius* in his Encomium of Baldness. Now since I have ventured to play the *Aristarchus* in reference to so many eminent *Vertuosi*, methinks I may dare to adde the same Censure of our late English *Rosie-Crusians*, but yet of all men I am most sorely afraid of angring these, because they seem to be of a very quarrelsome humour, and to have a huge ambitition to be esteemed the Polemical Scripturients of the Age; whereas I cannot but be scared from Engaging with a *Rosie-Crusian*, ever since I first saw the Controversial Rencountres of *Eugenius Philalethes*; and besides, (to confess my fears to you) I know not but the Romantick Heroes of this Order may have retriev'd the lost Invention of Enchanted Arms, especially that lovely Fairie Knight descended (as the Romance of his Life relates it, 'tis a prettier Tale then that of *Amadis de Gaul*) of the *Cesar Heydons of Rome*, and the venerable Author of the *Heydonian Philosophy*, as himself modestly stiles his own ignorant, uncouth, and ridiculous Scrible.

But 'tis more fitting that these *Pedantick Cheats* were chastised by the Publique Rods,

in that they directly Poiſon mens minds, and diſpoſe them to the wildeſt and moſt *Enthuſiaſtick Fanaticiſme*; for there is ſo much Affinity between *Roſi-Crucianiſme* and *Enthuſiaſme*, that whoever entertains the one, he may upon the ſame reaſon embrace the other; And what Peſtilential Influences the Genius of *Enthuſiaſme* or opinionative Zeal has upon the Publick Peace, is ſo evident from Experience, that it needes not be prov'd from Reaſon. To conclude, I am confident, that from the beginning of time to this day, there has not been ſo great a Conjunction of Ignorance with Confidence, as in theſe Fellows, which certainly of all other Aſpects is the moſt contrary and malignant to true knowledge.

4. My next Accuſation is, that inſtead of pure and genuine Reaſon, they abound ſo much with gaudy and extravagant Phancies. I that am too ſimple or too ſerious to be cajol'd with the frenzies of a bold and ungovern'd Imagination cannot be perſwaded to think the Quaintest plays and ſportings of wit to be any true and real knowledge. I can eaſily allow their Diſcourſes the Title of *Philoſophical Romances*, (a ſort of more ingenious impertinencies) and 'tis with this eſtimate I would have them read: But when they pretend to be Natures Secretaries, and to underſtand all her Intrigues, or to be Heavens Privadoes, talking

of

of the transactions there, like men lately dropt thence encircled with *Glories*, and cloathed with the Garments of *Masts* and *Ether*, and yet put us off with nothing but rampant Metaphors, and Pompous Allegories, and other splendid but empty Schemes of speech, I must crave leave to account them (to say no worse) Poets and Romancers. True Philosophy is too sober to descend to these wildnesses of Imagination, and too Rationall to be cheated by them. She scornes, when she is in chase of Truth to quarry upon trifling and dy Phansasmes. Her Game is things not words. I shall not presume to censure *Plato*'s Stile for its being too Pompous & Poetick, though this has been done already by *Aristotle*, *Dionysius Halicarnassæus*, *Vossius*, and other Professors of the *Criticall Art*. Only I remember I had not long conversed with Platonick Authors, when I took occasion to set it downe as a note to my selfe, that though his huge sublime stile may relish sweet to childish and liquorish Fancies, yet it rather loaths and nauceats a discreet understanding then informs and nourishes it. That *Platonisme* is almost nothing but an Allegory, is too notorious to stand a proof. *Plato*'s two famous Dialogues, *viz.* his *Symposium* and his *Phædrus*, ranked by *Ficinus* among his Metaphysical & Theological Treatises, treat of nothing but Love and Beauty, & of them too in Poëtick Schemes and Fables.

'Tis pritty to read their Metaphyſicall Diſcourſes of Truth, which are nothing elſe but *Love-ſtories*. The Soule being enamour'd with the tranſcendent Beauty and Lovelineſſe of Truth is enflam'd with impatient deſires of enjoying her embraces, and therefore Wooes and Courts her with indefatigable Patience, for ſhe muſt be ſuppoſed (as all other beauties are) exceſſively coy and difficult, but by diligence and importunity the underſtanding wins and enjoyes her; And then they expreſſe their embraces in the ſame language, they would ſpeak of the private tranſactions between Man and Wife. Thus (you ſee) they have the main Property of *Romancers* to talke much of Love, And indeed *Plato* himſelfe ſeems to have been the firſt Author of *Amorous Romances*, for towards the beginning of his *Convivium* he chides the Poets, that lived before him, for their Omiſſions in reference to Love, and that when they had made Panegyricks of all the other Gods, None of them had ever attempted an Elogie upon This.

Now to diſcourſe of the Natures of Things in Metaphors and Allegories is nothing elſe but to ſport and trifle with empty words, becauſe theſe Schemes do not expreſs the Natures of Things, but only their Similitudes and Reſemblances, for Metaphors are only words, which properly ſignifying one thing, are ap-

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ply'd to ſignifie another by reaſon of ſome Reſemblance between them. When therefore any thing is expreſs'd by a Metaphor or Allegory, the thing it ſelf is not expreſſed, but only ſome ſimilitude obſerv'd or made by Fancy. So that Metaphors being only the ſportings of Fancy comparing things with things, and not marks or ſignes of Things. All thoſe Theories in Philoſophie which are expreſſed only in metaphorical Termes, are not real Truths, but the meer Products of Imagination, dreſs'd up (like Childrens *babies*) in a few ſpangled empty words, ſuch as the Greeks call κενοφωνία empty Phraſeologies that have not Notion and Thing enough to fill them out. Thus their wanton and luxuriant fancies climbing up into the Bed of Reaſon, do not only defile it by unchaſt and illegitimate Embraces, but inſtead of real conceptions and notices of Things, impregnate the mind with nothing but Ayerie and Subventaneous Phantaſmes.

But 'tis ſtill more fantaſtick and abſurd to talke metaphorically concerning thoſe things, of whoſe Ideas we are utterly ignorant, and of which we are not able to diſcourſe in proper Terms, for ſuch Diſcourſe muſt needs be Non-ſence, and the matter of it muſt needs be nothing, becauſe they treat of they know not what. For Metaphors not ſignifying things, and things being alwayes ſignified by proper

Termes, what can be more evident then that meer Metaphors without proper Terms are employed about nothing at all, or only an Imaginary ſomething. And they that talk thus, do but firſt imagine a Subject, and then imagine in it ſome Reſemblances to ſomething elſe, that is in effect, they make a bauble, and then play with it. Of this Nature, (to give you one inſtance) are the greateſt part of their diſcourſes concerning the Soul, in diſcourſing of which, they draw Metaphors from all the Senſes, Members, and Functions of the Body, from all the General Hypotheſes of Nature; from all the Phænomena of the Heavens and the Earth, from all the ſeveral Properties and Operations of the ſeveral ſpecies of Creatures, & apply them the to Nature, Faculties, and Operations of the Soul; But becauſe they are altogether ignorant of the nature and ſubſtance of the Soul, and are not able to expreſs the greateſt part of theſe things by proper terms; all theſe Metaphors muſt paſs for idle and inſignificant Non-ſenſe, becauſe they ſignifie we know not what, and deſcribe we know not how; ſo that methinks the *Platonick Philoſophy* is juſt ſuch another thing as the *Epicureans* fancy the world to be, a Maſs of pretty words handſomely and luckily pack'd together; I muſt confeſs that before I had examined it, by reaſon of its huge

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Tumid words, I lookt upon it at a diſtance, as the loftieſt and ſublimeſt knowledge in the world, but when I came to ſurvey it more cloſely, I ſoon found that it was nothing elſe but words, ſo that I may more handſomely compare it to a Landskip, in which at a diſtance appear huge Rocks, and vaſt Mountaines, that ſeem to vie height with, and out-reach the Clouds, and yet by a nearer approach theſe vaſt bulky Appearances are found to be nothing but a few Artificial Shadows.

5. Another miſcarriage is, that they employ much of their Contemplations in things altogether uncertain and unſearchable. They delight exceſſively to wander into remote and inviſible Notions, and to talk confidently (as Travellers into forreign Regions are wont to do) of doubtful and unaccountable Problems, and any thing which is as far diſtant from Humane diſcovery, as concernment. Which ſcopeleſs deſire of ſearching into things exempt from humane Inquiſition, is that which renders Curioſity Criminal; For Curioſity it ſelf is a gallant and heroical Quality, and the natural Product of a Generous Complexion, but when it aſpires after the knowledge of things placed above its Reach, it degenerates into a vain and fruitleſs Ambition, or rather an unnatural luſt of the mind after ſtrange and extravagant Notions. Though the Truth

of it is, The minds (or rather fancies) of men have ſuch a naturall liquoriſhneſſe after the knowledge of things ſtrange and remote, that they ſwallow nothing with ſo gratefull a Guſto, as ſtories of things rare and unuſuall; neither care they how uncertaine and Phantaſtick they be, ſo they be but odde and prodigious; and hence it comes to paſſe, that men are generally more tickled and enchanted with *Legends* and *Romances*, then with uſefull and remarkable *Memoires*. Which (they ſay) is the Reaſon why the Ancients made ſo much uſe of Fables and Apologues to inſtruct the People, becauſe they carried in them ſomething monſtrous, and exceeding the limits of Probability. The ſenſeleſſe multitude, that could not reliſh the wiſe Diſcourſes of *Socrates*, would be much taken and ſurpriſed with a pretty and extravagant Tale of a Lyon, an Ape, or a Fox, *&c.* But not to aggravate this Childiſhneſſe of theſe dull and muddy Soules. 'Tis an unpardonable Luxury and Wantonneſſe for Wiſe and conſidering Philoſophers, to ſpend their time and ſtudy to diſcloſe diſtant and inſcrutable Myſteries, and frontleſly to dictate to the World in ſuch Theories, as are infinitely remote from humane knowledge and diſcovery, and which 'tis as impoſſible to know, as it would be if they had never been. And that the *Platoniſts* are of all men moſt chargeable with

with this folly, these few ensuing instances I may demonstrate. As when they confidently take upon them to give the world exact and minute descriptions of Incorporeal Beings; To give an account of the Nature and Oeconomy of the God-head, and how the severall Ranks of Ideas are suspended upon the three ἑνάδικαι ὑποστάσεις *Uniform Hypostases*, to pry into the most hidden Recesses of the Divine Mind, and distinctly to delineate how the Ideas of all Created Perfections are there displayed. To discourse about the Substance, Nature, Properties, Offices, Actions, Orders, and Polities of Angels: To assert that the Heavenly Host is divided into three Hierarchies, and that each Hierarchie is subdivided into three Orders, and every Order into as many Legions, as there are contain'd Individuals in every Legion, *i.e.* 6666; and that this Ternary of Hierarchies, and Nonary of Orders do Circulate about the three-fold Essence of God, as the Planets about the Sun, with infinite other the like Dreams about their peculiar Natures, Offices, Distances, and Employments: And withall to pretend to demonstrative Evidence in these things. Again, when they confidently assert the *First Mind* to be the onely Author of Souls; and that humane Souls were temper'd in the same *Vessel*, where the Soul of the Universe had

See *Proclus Plat. Theol. l.* 4 *c.* 19.

had been wrought; and that they were made out of ſome remaining fragments of that mixture out of which the Gods of the ſecond and third *Claſſis* had been framed; That the *Firſt Mind* had deputed the *Genii* or *Junior Deities* Guardians of his *Off-ſpring*; and that it is they, that Marry them to their Reſpective *Vehicles*. When they define whether the *Apoſtate Genii* be purely immaterial; and whether they be vitally united with matter; and whether they were made peccable only by union with their *Vehicles*; whether any of the *Aerial Spirits* be *Atheiſts* or no, whether any of them be of a ſportive, droling humour, and delight to effect Antick Prodigies in the Aire, to abuſe and affright ſilly Mortals; How they change Intelligence, and diſcourſe together. When they delineate the Coſmographie of the *Archetypall World*, repleniſhed with the Immaterial Ideas of all material Beings; and deſcribe the *Syſteme* of the Inviſible Heavens. When they frame particular *Hypotheſes*, not onely of the nature of the Soul, but of the manner of its living, before its lapſe into this life, and after its return home again. Laſtly, when they Graphically deſcribe the manner of the worlds laſt and final Conflagration: I might adde too their *Hypotheſes* about the manner of the worlds Production; for unleſſe they had been Spectators, it was not poſ-

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ſible for them to know in what way and method the Univerſe was Erected, that depending wholly on the free Election of the Divine Will: Though ſome Learned Men have thought it a mighty Confirmation of the Truth of the Moſaick Writings, if they could but evince a conſonancy of any of the *Philoſophers Hypotheſes* with the Moſaick account of the Origine of the Univerſe; as if their naked ſurmiſes could give any Teſtimony to Truth: For either they received the Account they give, from a credible Tradition, and if ſo, then *Moſes* was the firſt Author thereof, for none elſe could give any certaine Account of the Proceſſe, Providence was pleaſed to uſe in the Production of things, but certainly 'tis no Argument of the Truth of the Moſaick Account, becauſe the *Jewes* told it to the *Egyptians*, and they to the *Grecians*, for this can adde no Authority or Evidence to it: Or elſe they were of their own framing, and conſequently were altogether groundleſſe and unwarrantable Conjectures; for it was ſurely impoſſible any mans Reaſon ſhould tell him the particular Circumſtances of the worlds Creation; as that its materiall Principle was a *Tohu* and a *Bohu*, that it was agitated by the Divine Spirit, that ſeverall Portions were form'd at ſeverall times, that all was finiſhed in ſix dayes ſpace, rather then five or ſeven, and the like:

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this deſigne therefore of diſcovering a Conſonancy between the Hypotheſes of any of the Philoſophers concerning the Origine of the Univerſe, and the Moſaick Account thereof, is abſolutely ſcopeleſſe and unprofitable. But this is a digreſſion that has thruſt its ſelfe in here before I was aware of it. To reſume therefore my former Theme, is it not the higheſt and moſt diſingenuous madneſſe for men to give ſuch confident and definitive ſentences in matters ſo remote and unaccountable? All the forementioned particulars (to which it were eaſie to adde a thouſand more) are apparently beyond the reach of humane Cogniſance, and ſuch things as cannot be known but by Revelation, there being no other means to attaine to any knowledge of things of their vaſt diſtance and remoteneſſe. And if wee will but reflect upon our own Thoughts, we muſt confeſſe that we cannot perceive the Ideas of Beings that are not placed within the Horizon of Senſe, and thoſe that pretend to a diſcovery of them, had better pretend to Oracles, Propheſies, Illapſes, and Divinations, then to the ſober and ſteady Maximes of Philoſophie. And therefore 'tis not unuſuall with the *Platoniſts* to pretend to a kind of Enthuſiaſme. They ſtile themſelves ἱερόφαντας, the inſpired Prieſts of Truth; and their Philoſophie ἐνθουσιαστικὴν as if it had been poured

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into them in a Divine and Extaticall Fury; and *Proclus* ſayes it a thouſand times of *Plato* and his Commentators, that they did ἐμβακχεύεσθαι, as if they had written with a kind of *Bacchical Enthuſiaſme*; And they every where talke ſo like Prophets and Oracles, as if they were inſpired at leaſt by a *Bath-Col*: And 'tis hugely pleaſant to read their own Exorbitant Parades of the Exalted, Divine, and Extatick ſublimity of Platonick Contemplation; they boaſt ſo often of ſequeſtring themſelves from all Corporeal Commerce, and ſoaring up into the Ethereal Regions, that a man would expect Newes from the third Heaven every day. If they were in good earneſt, we might expect ſtrange diſcoveries indeed, but alas, theſe Sons of Imagination are as little troubled with *Real Extaſies*, as other men, onely they are pleaſed to expreſſe the Frenzies of their fiery and ſubtle Fancies by theſe Alluſions. So that let them talk never ſo Seraphically of retiring from the trivial and common Entertainments of ſenſe, they do but ſit down in the Theatre of Fancy, and entertain themſelves with the *Idola Specus*, or Images of their own Complexion, and though they take them for great Realities, (as other Sleepers do their Dreams) yet when they awake out of their fanciſull Viſions, and return to a ſtrength and conſiſtency of Reaſon, they then

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diſcerne them to have been only evaſid Appearances repreſented (as all Dreams are) upon the Scene of Imagination.

Now 'tis a great miſtake of ſome men to think it neceſſary that wee ſhould be able to confute ſuch vain and ungrounded Poſitions; and that for this Reaſon, becauſe they are out of the Sphear of humane knowledge; for though they may ſometimes perchance, like the *Carteſian Vortices*, juſtle with ſome certain Truths belonging to our Sphear by reaſon of their Vicinity, yet that happens by chance; and is not neceſſary: But being in their own Natures out of our View, 'tis not to be expected we ſhould give any account of them, becauſe that would be to aſſert what we cannot know, which is to commit the very fault we are now chaſtiſing; 'tis therefore ſufficient to ſhew the abſurdity of an aſſertion, if I can evince it to be unevident, though I can not to be untrue, for it is not leſſe unbecoming a Wiſe man to aſſent to an uncertainty than to an untruth: becauſe 'tis not the real certainty of a Truth, that is a ſufficient motive of our aſſent, but its evidence to us; for all Truths are in themſelves equally certain (though not equally neceſſary and durable) but 'tis from the variety of evidence that the difference of our knowledge proceeds, and howſoever aſſertions may be in themſelves real and certain

tain Truths, yet unleſſe they are evident as well as certain, they will be to us vain and fictitious Phantaſmes. And therefore I cannot but commend this one *Paradox* of the *Stoicks*, That a Wiſe man is alwayes free from Opinion, Ignorance, and Error: From Opinion, becauſe he will not aſſent to uncertainties: from Ignorance, becauſe what he knows not, he knows that he knows it not, and ſo has as much knowledge of the thing, as he is capable of: from Error, becauſe he that will neither aſſent to what is uncertain, and knows what is to be known, and what not, can ſcarce be liable to miſtakes. And it was none of the leaſt Inſtances of *Epicurus*'s Wiſdome and Modeſty, that he made it one of his cheifeſt *Phyſiological Canons*, that he had nothing to do with [illegible] *matters meerly Poſſible, and meerly Contingent*; and therefore he was alwayes wont to ſtate and conclude all Queſtions about the Phænomena of the Heavens, and all other remote and unevident Enquiries, with nothing elſe but *It may be ſo.*

Beſides in ſuch caſes any man may aſſert whatever a warm or giddy Brain may ſuggeſt, and we ſhall have equal inducements to embrace contrary Hypotheſes; thus as *Mahomet* has ſomewhere in his *Alcoran* deſcribed the Syſteme of the inviſible Heavens, the Orders of Angels, and the ſeveral Folds, in which their

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ſeverall Choruſes reſide, as well as *Plato*, ſo I have as great Reaſon to induce me to credit the *Mahometan Hypotheſis* as the *Platonick*. And then (to diſpatch) we are not concern'd in ſuch caſes to ſhew the vanity of the Aſſertion (for that we ſuppoſe impoſſible) but that of the Aſſertor, whom we blame for acting ſo much againſt all the Rules of Reaſon, in affirming that, which 'tis evidently impoſſible for him to know; whereby he both troubles the world with debates equally unneceſſary and endleſſe, and obſtructs the Advancement of True Knowledge, by diverting thoſe that are in queſt after it, into dark, dubious, and endleſſe Traverſes: And certainly among the many things that have been hindrances to the diſcovery of Truth, none ſeem to have been of a more unhappy and diffuſed Influence, then that men have been generally digging for it, where its veins lie too deep, and out of the fathome of humane Induſtrie.

Now if this one Caution againſt dogmatizing in matters remote and unevident were well imbibed, it would not only prove an effectual Antidote againſt many thouſand peſtilent controverſies, that inteſt the world, but alſo a deadly Bane to the Platonick Philoſophie; for if in reading the Platoniſts, you ſhall as you proceed, but ask them for a rationall evidence of their magiſteriall dictates (eſpecially

cially in thoſe things which they boaſt of as their ſublimeſt ſpeculations) and reſolve that you will not make them matters of opinion, till they ſhall have given you ſome rationall inducements ſo to do, I will engage you ſhall never be one of their Diſciples, though you ſhould ſtudy them to the revolution of their Great Year.

Before I take my leave of this Conſideration, I cannot but note that this Impudent humour of talking confidently of things uncertain and widely remote from humane Cognizance was the peculiar crime of the firſt and earlieſt *Hereticks* in the Chriſtian Church. Thus the main of the Heretical Opinions of the *Gnoſticks*, and the ſeveral ſub-dividing Factions of them, *Valentinians*, *Saturnilians*, *Baſilidians*, and other primitive Hereticks were only ſome extravagant Hypotheſes concerning the Divinity, and its Eſſential Eminations, and their ſeveral *Syzigiæ*, and *Pleromata*, out of which they framed a peculiar Oeconomie of the Godhead, compounding the Divine Nature out of a multitude of Orders and Individuals (you may fancy it ſuch a kind of Monſter, as the Picture of Mr *Hobbs's Leviathan*.) And this they did by blending ſome Fancies out of *Plato*, and Fables out of *Heſiods* Theogonia with the Goſpell of Saint *John*, as the Fathers unanimouſly conclude. And as

tis reported of *Simon Magus*, that he endeavoured to compound a Religious Worſhip out of the Rites of Paganiſme, and the Sacraments of Chriſtianity; ſo 'tis manifeſt that the *Gnoſticks* would have integrated one Syſteme of Divinity by mingling the *Orphean*, *Pythagorean*, and *Platonick* Theologie with the Doctrines of the Goſpel. Of this ſort of men and their Doctrines all the more learned Commentators underſtand the frequent cautions of the Apoſtles againſt Hereſies and Hereticks, and peculiarly that eminent paſſage, *Coloſ.* 2. 8. where the Apoſtle warns them againſt *Philoſophie and vain deceit, after the Tradition of men, after the Rudiments of the world*, i. e. a ψευδώνυμος γνῶσις a falſe knowledge that pretends to know the higheſt myſteries upon the naked Aſſertions of ſome confident men. And of theſe πληρώματα and the ſeveral emanations of the Godhead do they underſtand thoſe fabulous γενεαλογίαι Saint *Paul* mentions 1 *Tim.* 1. 4. ſo that the Hereticks, the Apoſtles ſpeak of, were only giddy and opinionative men, that took upon them to introduce the Opinions of the Philoſophers into the Chriſtian Faith: For which reaſon it was that *Tertullian* ſtiled the Philoſophers *Hereticorum Patriarchas*, becauſe from them were borrowed the greateſt part of Heretical Opinions. Thus the Learned * *Holſtenius* has made

* *Diſſert. de vita & ſcriptis Porphyr.* c. 1.

made a Parallel between the *Pythagorean* and *Manichean* Principles. And *Johannes Baptiſta Criſpus* in his diſcuſſing of *Plato*'s Opinions, has at the end of every Chapter ſhewn what Hereſies ſprung from each Opinion. In this Notion of Hereſie the School-Doctors will prove as Arch-Hereticks as any of the Ancients, for they have in the ſame manner corrupted the ſimplicity and purity of Chriſtian Religion, by blending the Placits of *Ariſtotle* with the Articles of Faith, as *Manes* and *Valentinus* did by mingling with the Chriſtian Faith, the Philoſophy of *Plato* and *Pythagoras*. And then they have filled their vaſt Volumns with ſubtle and nice Hypotheſes made out of this mixture, out of which are of neceſſity generated an infinite number of idle and unprofitable Altercations, or as (as my *Lord Bacon* prettily ſtiles them) *Vermiculate Queſtions*, becauſe they are generated from the putrefaction of true and ſolid knowledge, like worms from putrified ſubſtances: though perhaps they may ere long deſerve that Epithete upon another ſcore. I might have added to them the late grand Dogmaticall Maſter of Orthodoxy, whoſe rude Dogmatiſing has occaſioned as many Controverſies in the Chriſtian Church, as ever *Manes* or *Valentinus* did. The reſult of all this is to direct to the true Apoſtolicall Notion of Hereſie, which is not ſo much an

Opinion that is apparently falſe, as one that is groundleſſe and unwarrantable, and ſo naturally tends to the creating unneceſſary diſputes, and making Factions and Diviſions, as *Plotinus* ſpeaks of the *Gnoſticks*, that they were *Inventors of new and vain Opinions, to no other end then the erecting of a peculiar Sect.* And though moſt of the Primitive Hereſies were falſe and impious, as well as raſh and ungrounded, yet that which gave them their denomination, was their vanity and tendency to create miſcheivous and deſtructive Schiſmes. The way then to prevent Controverſies, and to avoid Schiſms, is not to define, but ſilence groundleſſe and dividing Opinions. The Church ſhould in ſuch caſes imitate *Socrates*'s *Damon*, that never gave any poſitive Anſwer, but as oft as it was conſulted anſwered either *No*, or *Nothing*; becauſe they are uſually ſtarted about matters uncertain, and conſequently undeterminable. So that when both Parties determine contrary to each other, and upon that ſeperate, they are both equally Schiſmaticks, becauſe they both divide upon inſufficient and unwarrantable grounds. For inſtance (to paſſe by that early and unhappy *Quartodecimarian* Schiſm.) In that grand Schiſm of the *Greek Church* from the *Romane*, though the latter was notori-

Ennead. 2. lib. 9.

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riouſly Schiſmatical, yet the former was not altogether guiltleſſe: for although they had Reaſons ſufficient to warrant a ſeceſſion from the Romaniſts; as the Popes uſurpation in challenging a Power to impoſe on them new Articles of Faith, and putting of this Tyranny into practiſe, by requiring of all that would be Members of the Romane Communion, to receive his addition of the *Filioque* into their Creeds: Now (I ſay) had they divided only for the maintaining their own Liberty againſt the Papal Encroachments, and for not admitting the addition of *Filioque* as an Article of Faith, their ſeparation had been juſt and noble. But when they ſtood as obſtinately on the other ſide, as the Romaniſts did, and would not admit of an Union, but upon Condition, that it might be received as an Article of Faith, that the Holy Ghoſt proceeded from the *Father only*, they cannot be cleared of a Schiſmatical diviſion. Now if inſtead of being dogmatical in both theſe contrary Extreams, both Parties had agreed to ſilence the Controverſie and decide it neither way, as Truth would not have been leſſe ſecur'd, ſo Peace would have been much better preſerved. I conclude therefore in the words of a late Learned and Judicious Divine. *If the Church had ſtopt and damn'd up the Originals and Springs of Controverſies,*

rather then by the determining for the one part, to give them as it were a Pipe and Conduit to convey them to Posterity, I perswade my self the Church had not suffered that inundation of Opinions, with which at this day it is over-run.

The supposed Agreement between MOSES *and* PLATO *DISPROVED.*

I Have *(Sir)* presented you with these Reflections rather then any other, not so much because I apprehend them more considerable (though perhaps they are so) as because they first occurred to my Thoughts: For it had been no difficult work to have added Infinite more; but these Considerations being already too prolix, and the small portion of Time allotted for this Task almost expired, I shall wave those that remain, and only vindicate the Accusations I have already made, by examining and controuling an Apology, that endeavours to wash them off.

For it is replyed on *Plato*'s behalf, that he cannot well be charged with Rashnesse and Futility, but the Accusation must reach *Moses* also, and the rest of the *Sacred Prophets*; because from them *Plato* borrowed his choicest and

and ſublimeſt Theories, of which, if in any thing vain and trifling, the firſt Authors ought in reaſon to beare the greateſt Blame, and ſo at length my charging *Plato* with Futility, if it be valid, will fall foul upon *Moſes* himſelf. Which farther compleatly excuſes his Raſhneſſe, ſeeing he delivered his Theologicall Theories, not from his own Fancy, but derived them from ſo good and ſure an Authority, as *Moſes* and the *Prophets*. And that he did ſo is the unanimous conſent of all the learned world: Fathers, School-Doctors, and Modern Writers agree not more unanimouſly in any one Principle then this: τὶ ἐςι Πλάτων, ἢ Μωϋσῆς ἀτθιτίζων is now become as vulgar and trivial as a Proverb. The particular account they give hereof, is this, That *Plato* derived many of theſe Myſteries from *Pythagoras*, who in his Travels into Ægypt and the Eaſt had either immediately received them from the Jewes themſelves, or from the Ægyptian Prieſts, and the Chaldean Wiſe men, who came to know them by Converſe with, and Tradition from the Jewes. And that *Plato* himſelf travelling into Ægypt in queſt after knowledge, received his choiceſt and moſt important notices concerning Divine and Supernaturall things from the Jewes, who about that time in great flocks reſorted thither, or from the Ægyptian Prieſts, who either derived them

from the Moſaick writings, or received them from the Jewes by an Oral Tradition. For (ſay they) God delivered to *Moſes* in Mount Sinai a twofold Law, תורה שבכתב The *Written Law* תורה שבעל פה The *Vocal Law*, which is the Myſticall and Enigmatical meaning of the Former, but by reaſon of its extraordinary ſacredneſs was not expoſed to the rude People, but only whiſpered and conveyed in the ſlender Pipe of Auricular Tradition from age to age among the great Sanhedrim and the Prophets down to the time of *Eſdras*, by whom (and the great Synagogue, of which many of the latter Prophets were members) it was committed to writing, leaſt by reaſon of their frequent diſperſions and captivities it ſhould by ſome ill fortune periſh: which carryed its ſtream out of the private Channel, in which it run before, and ſoon ſpread it abroad among Forreign Nations, eſpecially in Egypt and Chaldea, where great numbers of Jewes reſided. For an eminent Inſtance of all which, they alledge the Doctrine of the Sacred Trinity, which (ſay they) being one of the Rareſt and Choiceſt Myſteries of this *Vocal Cabala*, was greedily embraced by the Egyptians, from whom *Plato* and his Followers received that clear and full knowledge thereof, which appears ſo much every where in their Writings.

To

To all which I anſwer in theſe enſuing Conſideration.

1. That it is ſo far from being matter of commendation, that it is rather a diſparagement to have been converſant in, and borrowed from the old Eaſtern and Egyptian Learning. That the Ancient Sages of Egypt and the Eaſt were acquainted with the firſt Rudiments of Mathematical Sciences is evident from the moſt authentick Records of Ancient Times, and from that skill, which the Grecians gained among them. But it is as evident, that all their Theological Learning was lamentably frivolous, obſcure, fabulous, uncouth, magical and ſuperſtitious. The Scythian Taraboſteſci, the Perſian Magi, the Indian Brachmans and Gymnoſophiſts, the Egyptian Prieſts, the Bards and Druids of Gaul and Brittain, and other Ancient Sects have (I confeſſe) made a great noiſe in the World, yet they that endeavour to celebrate them moſt, tell us ſo many ſuperſtitious and Pedantick Stories, as ſufficiently evince them to have been no very extraordinary Perſons. Any one that conſiders thoſe few Opinions & Ratiocinations of theirs that are ſtill extant, will eaſily conclude them to have been men of no great Reaſon or Judgment. Some have endeavour'd to maintain the Credit of this Ancient Learning by retreiving

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and collecting its ſcattered Fragments, and others by counterfeiting ſuppoſititious Authors, ſuch as *Zoroaſter* and *Hermes Triſmegiſtus*, but whoever will be at the paines to peruſe *Zoroaſter*'s Oracles, the Books of *Triſmegiſt*, the Writings of *Pſellus*, and the *Earle* of *Mirandula*'s Riddles, with which he challenged all the Learned world, will need no other proof of the Vanity of all pretences to the more abſtruſe and myſtical Learning of the Antients. I do not queſtion but that great and honourable Perſonage I laſt mentioned, was a Perſon of ſtupendious Parts and Learning, yet I am ſure that thoſe Notions, wherewith he made the greateſt Noiſe in the world, were but grand and pompous Futilities.

The Old *Egyptian* Learning was ſo Famous, that the Spirit of God, ſets forth the Eminency of *Moſes*'s knowledge by his skill in it, and the matchleſneſſe of *Solomons* Wiſdome by its exceeding it; And therefore I conclude that it was converſant about more generous and more uſeful Notices then afterwards; ſuch as *Geometry*, *Aſtronomy*, *Policy*, *Phyſick*, and other reſembling Arts, which either were perfective of their Rational Faculties, or did miniſter to the uſes and neceſſities of Nature: as is generally reported by all Ancient Hiſtorians.

Act. 7.22. 1 *King.* 4. 29,30.

rians. But had the Priſtine Learning of *Ægypt* been the ſame it was in latter Ages, it had been as great a diſparagement to *Moſes*, as 'tis now juſtly reputed a commendation, that he was accompliſhed in all the *Ægyptian* learning, and had amounted only to this, that he was a vain, trifling, ſuperſtitious Fellow. And what the *Egyptian* Prieſt objected to the Greeks, that they were alwayes Children, might be more truly applied to themſelves, if it be the property of children to value trifles. What childiſh fooleries their Hieroglyphicks were, Learned Men now prove from the loſt labour and fruitleſſe induſtry of *Kirchers Oedipus Ægyptiacus*. Certainly, if they had deſign'd to abuſe and debauch this humour, they could ſcarce have contrived more fond and extravagant Emblems; and indeed their courſeneſſe and unlikeneſſe to the things they ſhould reſemble, ſufficiently diſcover them to have been but the rude Eſſayes of a barbarous and undiſciplined Fancy. The truth of it is, the *Egyptians* ſeem to have had onely knowledge enough, to know that their neighbours had none at all, and cunning enough to vaunt an Inſpection into ſtrange and abſtruſe Myſteries, knowing that others by reaſon of their Ignorance could not controule them, and by reaſon of their credulity would be very

apt

apt to credit them, and thence they continually abuſed the credulous Grecians with Tales and Fables. And ſurely the *Egyptian* Prieſt took not a little ſecret pleaſure, when he perceived Old *Solon* to entertain his Romantick and Legendary account of Ancient Times with ſo much greedineſſe and ſatisfaction; unleſſe perhaps himſelf had been impoſed upon by earlier Romancers, for I fancy the *Egyptian* Prieſts to have been ſuch another generation of men, as our Monks were in the darkeſt times of Popery, who believed as well as recorded thoſe Legends, which earlier Impoſtors had Coined. So that if the ancient Sages of *Greece* had purchaſed no more knowledge by their Travels into *Egypt*, then thoſe few remainders of *Egyptian* learning ſtill upon Record (excepting a few Mathematical Theories) they had ſpent their time and pains to as little purpoſe, as the famous Traveller of *Odcomb*, who footed moſt parts of the known world to no other purpoſe, then to deſcribe his Hoſts Beard or Sign-poſt. I might here alſo give an account of the mean abilities of *Orpheus* & *Pythagoras*, but I delight not to ſpeak too hardly of any *Vertuoſo*'s aſhes, and therefore I forbear: For it is not my deſign, by repreſenting theſe Primitive Sages as fools and dunces, to rob them of that eſteem and veneration, with which they have been deſervedly

In Platonis Timæo.

ſervedly honoured in all ſucceding Ages, for though it be granted that their knowledge was much inferiour to that of latter Ages, (for Learning being then in its Infancy, muſt needs be Childiſh, but is ſince grown more ſolid and manly) yet it is but reaſonable they ſhould be allowed bigger Proportions of Honour and Renown, not onely becauſe they were very wiſe Men, conſidering the rudeneſſe and ignorance of the times, in which they lived, but becauſe they were the firſt founders and diſcoverers of that knowledge, which after Ages have but improved, & the world ſurely is much more beholding to thoſe that firſt invent uſefull Arts and Sciences, than to thoſe that only improve them; it is therefore juſt, they ſhould be allowed greater Glory, though they had much leſſe knowledge then their followers. Beſides, *Theological* ſpeculations met with the lateſt and ſloweſt improvements, and therefore thoſe that might have conſiderable skill in other Theories, might be (as indeed they were) barbarouſly ignorant in theſe.

2. I perceive not any ſuch clear Agreement between the *Platonick Philoſophy* and the Sacred Scriptures, as may give us any tolerable ground of ſuſpecting the one to have been derived from the other: For moſt of the Notions, in which *Plato* ſpeaks moſt conſonantly to the Scriptures, are ſo obvious and ſo univerſally ac-

acknowledged, that it is eafie to diſcern how he came by them, without any acquaintance with holy Writings: ſuch as are the Being of God, the Immortality of the Soul, the Eſſential differences of Good and Evil, ſome general Rules of Natural and Eſſential Goodneſſe. Thus his Exceptions againſt the Grecian Idolatry and Superſtition muſt by all means be tranſcribed from the *Moſaick* Writings, and when in the *Eighth Book* of his Laws, he enjoyns Solemn Feſtivals in honour of the Gods, muſt needs have it from the fourth Commandement of the Decalogue, and when in the *Tenth Book*, he declaims againſt Irreverence in Divine Worſhip, he muſt by all means borrow it from the ſecond Precept, and when in his *Eleventh Book* he treats of honour due from Children to their Parents, he muſt doubtleſſy have read the fifth Commandment, and the like in other Inſtances. Whereas the natural reaſonableneſſe of theſe Principles is in it ſelf ſo apparently clear and evident, that they could ſcarce eſcape the obſervation of any rational and inquiſitive man; and therefore *Plato*'s lighting upon them is no more an Argument, that he was converſant in the *Moſaick* Writings, then is his ſaying that the Sun is the brighteſt Star in the Firmament.

V. Collium de conjunct. Pagan. l. 5. c. 17. 25. Clem. Al. x. Strom. x. Euſeb. præpar. Evang. l. 11, 12

And

And then as for their more hidden and abſtruſe myſteries, where they ſeem to agree moſt, their difference is greater then their agreement; and it would not be difficult to ſhew how theſe Notions, which have the faireſt Conſonancy to Scripture, are derived from *Hypotheſes* that have none at all, as I ſhall anon evince in the Article of the Trinity. And ſhall in the Interim ſhew the infirmity and vanity of this conceit, by ſhewing the weakneſſe of that Authority, upon which it is grounded.

The firſt time then, that I met with it, was in Modern Authors, who vouch'd the Authority of the Primitive Fathers for it, betaking my ſelf therefore to them, I found ſome of them to aver it indeed with no ſmall earneſtneſs, eſpecially *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Euſebius*, *Theodoret*, but upon no better grounds, then the naked aſſertions of two or three *Jews* (eſpecially *Cleobulus* and *Joſephus*) and that, when contending about the Glories and Prerogatives of their own Nation, in which controverſie men of all Nations are apparently partial for their own, but none ſo groſly as the Jews, who would have their Nation the only Fountain of all knowledge and wiſdome, (as if all other men had been meer Muſhromes, and had not reaſon enough to reflect upon and obſerve the natures and properties of Things) and there-

Apud Clem. Alexand. Strom. 5.

therefore *Aristobulus* (the first Founder and Foundation of this Conceit) does with the same Confidence maintain that the Peripatetick Philosophie was stoln out of *Moses* and the Prophets, as that the Fancies of *Plato* and *Pythagoras* were taken thence. There are perhaps one or two obsolete *Grecian* Testimonies produced on the behalf of this Opinion, but I shall not be at the pains critically to examine their weight and authority, because I have as great a suspition of all those obsolete records concerning the *Jewish Nation* cited by some Ancient Authors, as I have of their *Sibillan Prophecies* and other confessed Impostures, in that most of them discover their own Forgery: As those so famous and still credited Testimonies of *Apollo*'s *Oracle* on behalf of the Jewes, of which there is a great multitude in *Eusebius* his *Præparatio Evangelica*, among the rest this is one of the *famousest*.

Μοῦνοι Χαλδαῖοι σοφίαι λάχον ἠδ' ἄρ' Ἑβραῖοι
Αὐτογένεθλον ἄνακτα σεβαζόμενοι Θεὸν ἁγνῶς. l. 9. c. 10.

The Chaldeans and Hebrews alone are Professors of true Wisdome, who worship the Eternal God in a pure and holy manner. Tis strange *Eusebius* should think the World so credulous (and yet so credulous it hath been) as to believe that this *Distick* ever drop'd from *Apollo*'s *Oracle*, for whether that were inspired by the *Priests*,

or

or by the *Divel*, I am confident they were neither of them ſo honeſt or ſo ſimple, as thus openly to commend the *Jewiſh Religion* and condemn their own.

But now as for thoſe Writers, who were beſt able to give the trueſt account of the *Commerce* between the Jewes and the Grecians (if there had been any) they are univerſally ſilent in it: The *Ancient Records* of *Greece* are ſcarce more ſilent in any thing, then the *Jewiſh Nation*. Though they relate frequent *Voyages* of their wiſe men into *Forreigne Countries*, yet no mention at all of their *Jewiſh Traffick*; they acknowledge their *Geometry* to have been imported from *Egypt*, their *Aſtronomie* from *Chaldea*, their *Arithmetick* from *Phenicia*, their *Theologie* from *Perſia*, but no account of their *Cargo* from *Judea*. And *Lactantius* juſtly and ſeriouſly chides with the Antient Philoſophers, becauſe they neglected to trade with the Jewes for *Wiſdome*, as well as other Nations. *Equidem mirari ſoleo* (ſaies he) *quod cum Pythagoras & poſtea Plato amore indaganda veritatis ad Ægyptios, & Magos, & Perſas uſque Penetraſſent, ut earum Gentium ritus & ſacra Cognoſcerent (ſuſpicabantur enim ſapientiã in Religione verſari) ad Judæos tamen non acceſſerint, penes quos tum ſolos fuit, & quo facilius ire potuiſſent.* De verâ Sap. cap. 2.

There are indeed ſome *Conjectures* to make

it probable that the *Grecians* might confound *Judea* with *Phenicia*, which if true, 'tis a good Argument that they had very little knowledge of it; for 'tis not likely that any, who conversed with the *Jewish Nation* should confound them with the *Phanicians*, when there was so vast not only difference but contrariety between them as to their *Civil State*, *Lawes*, *Customes*, and *Religion*. Nay the Jewish Religion, Customes, and Lawes being of so peculiar a constitution from those of all other Nations, it can scarce be supposed but that those who so carefully observed the Lawes and Customes of *Forreign Nations*, as the *Grecian Philosophers* did, should have taken a more signal and particular Notice of the *Jewish Constitutions* if they had been acquainted with them. Besides all which, let me adde that we find as great a consonancy of the opinions of the *Wise men* of other Nations with the *Hebrew Writings*, where there appeare no foot-steps of commerce between them, as of the Grecians. For instance, though *Numa Pompilius* is generally acknowledged the first *Pythagorean* (being more ancient then *Pythagoras*) yet there is not the least appearance of any commerce between him and the Jewes. And therefore when Mr. *Selden* thinks that if those 7 Books of Wisdome found in the Field of *Petilius* An. ab U. C.

De Jure Nat. & Gent. l. 1. cap. 2.

U. C. DLXX. and attributed to *Numa* by an Inſcription upon the Cheſt in which they were, were really his, that he was probably not unacquainted with the Diſcipline of the *Hebrews*, only becauſe *Caſſius Hemina* and *C. Piſo* in *Plinie* report that the matter contained in them was very conſonant to the *Pythagorick Philoſophie*; the beſt foundation of the conjecture is the (deſerved) greatneſſe of his own *name* and *authority*, for you cannot but perceive that in it ſelf 'tis very fond and frivolous, and if ſuch a licentious latitude may be allowed in hiſtoricall *gueſſes*, *Quidlibet ex Quolibet* will ſoon be as warrantable a *maxime* in Hiſtory, as 'tis in the *Epicurean Philoſophie*. It were eaſie to have given you a larger account hereof, but I write a *Letter* not a *Treatiſe*.

3. As to the pretence of a *Vocal Cabala*, I can ſcarce without amazement conſider with what confidence and eagerneſſe ſome learned men of late have cryed up an invention ſo novel & fanciful; for I know nothing more precarious & deſtitute of tolerable pretences then theſe *Cabaliſticall Traditions*, being only a late & ſilly Invention of the *Jewiſh Rabbins*: for they are altogether unknown to and unmentioned by the ancient both Jewes and Chriſtians. And yet *Kircher* (who never gives out at credulity) would have every one that does not believe the Divine Original of

Oedip. tom. 2. claſſ. 4. pref.

the *Cabala* to be convicted of Hereſie as an Enemy to the Divine Providence. But for my part, I cannot underſtand how any Rational man can be at all concerned for ſo vain and frivolous an Invention of the Modern (*i. e.* trifling) *Rabbins*. But he that could find all the Learning of the world in an *Egiptian Hieroglyphick* may find all the Articles of his Faith in a *Rabbinical Fable*. 'Tis certain that the *Cabala* was invented ſince the diſperſion of the *Jewiſh Nation*, (there being not the leaſt footſteps of it before) but in what Century or Period is uncertain and muſt remain ſo, for from the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* there commenced as to the *Jewiſh Hiſtory* a Tempus ἄδηλον (a Period alwayes fit for Fables;) there being no *Records* or *Monuments* of their Condition and Affairs, (unleſs ſome few fabulous Relations in the *Talmud*.) But whatever became of them, 'tis certain that being given up to a vain and trifling ſpirit, they imployed themſelves in fooliſh and abſurd Inventions, of which making Myſtical and Allegorical Interpretations of Scripture is none of the leaſt: eſpecially when they prefer them ſo much before the true and literal meaning: for they compare the Scripture it ſelf to a *Candle*, but the Myſtical ſenſe to a *Jewel*, for the diſcovery whereof the Candle is lighted; and the

the *Miſnical Doctors* (that is, they that ſtudy onely the literal ſenſe) are compared to *Apothecaries*, who only prepare thoſe Medicaments, which the *Phyſician* preſcribes, but the *Cabbaliſtical Doctors* to *Phyſicians*, who underſtand their Natures, Uſes, and ſecret Properties. And therefore they leave the literal and ſuperficial ſenſe of Scripture, to the rude and ignorant People, whilſt they that are learned dive into the Myſteries and depths of the Law, and by the help of Fancy fetch ſtrange and wonderful ſecrets from Words, Letters, Points, from their ſeveral Shapes, Combinations, Tranſpoſitions, Abbreviatures, Arithmetical Indications, and the like. And then with a frontleſs Impudence, aſſert that they came Originally from *Adam*, *Abraham*, and *Moſes*. You may ſee enough of this *Cabbaliſtical* Traſh in a thouſand Authours, but moſt Copiouſly in *Reuchlin de Arte Cabbaliſtica*, and in that grand Theſaurus of Learned Trifles, *Kirchers Oedip. tom.* 2. *Claſſ.* 4. The firſt that produced them into the Chriſtian World was the *Earle* of *Mirandula*, in whoſe time the very word *Cabbala* was ſo unknowne, that (as *Hottinger* relates out of *Garzon*) it was taken for a Witch, *Veneficiis dedita*. And the *Earle* himſelfe relates in his *Apology* that one of his greateſt Antigoniſts be-

ing asked what this *Cabbala* was, replyed that he was a certain notorious Heretick that had oppoſed himſelf againſt *Jeſus Chriſt*, and that from him his Accomplices and Followers were named *Cabbaliſta*. The *Earle*, when he had at a high price purchaſed ſome ſmall fragments of it from the *Jewes*, thought himſelf Maſter of the moſt ancient and valuable Monument in the World. The miſtake was pardonable in him, but unpardonable in thoſe who ſince have had opportunity to examine its firſt riſe and antiquity, and cannot diſcern the leaſt *Traces* of it beyond the *Talmudical Rabbins*: Beſides this, I might overthrow the *Cabbala* from rational Arguments taken from the thing it ſelf, as that it would reflect upon the Wiſdom of God, that he ſhould conveigh down ſuch material and important (Truths as are ſuppoſed to be contained in the *Cabbala*) by ſo uncertain and queſtionable a way, as *Oral Tradition*. That it renders the Word of God ridiculous and uſeleſs, and makes its meaning altogether doubtful and ambiguous, and expoſes it to the giddy and fanciful Conjectures of every *warm Brain*: but the groundleſneſs of the thing it ſelfe, makes all other confutation needleſs. Some (not unlearned men) have urged the *Conſiſtency* of the *Cabbala* with it ſelf, and the *ſuitableneſs* of the *Allegory* to the *Text* as no contempti-

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tible Argument of its Truth and Solidity. But alas, (beſide that moſt of their *Analogies* between the Myſtery and the Text are ſufficiently forced and uncouth) there's nothing more eaſie then for Fancy to find ſome *Conſonancy* between the moſt diſtant things, eſpecially in ſuch various and unlimited things as *Allegories* are. If you ſhould require it, I think I could with an ordinary plauſibility draw up a body of the *Epicurean Philoſophie* out of the Writings of *Jacob Behem*; and yet perhaps it would puzle you to think of any *Hypotheſes* of a more diſtant *Genius* then they. Such an *Africa* is Fancy, that it can couple things of the moſt diſtant and contrary Natures.

4. Having thus evidenced the unwarrantable Raſhneſs of deriving *Platonick Notions* from *Jewiſh Traditions*, I come in the next place to give (1.) A brief Account of the Riſe of that ſeeming agreeableneſs between the *Platonick* and the *Chriſtian Trinity*. (2.) To ſhew by what Principles and ſteps the *Platoniſts* happened upon their *Triad*.

For the firſt it ſeems to have its *Original* from thoſe counterfeit and ſuppoſititious Authors, which pretended to the greateſt Antiquity, but yet were really compoſed by the *Gnoſticks* out of the *Ethnick* and *Chriſtian Theology*, and aſcribed to names of the greateſt An-

tiquity and Veneration, ſuch as *Hermes Triſmegiſtus*, *Zoroaſters Oracles*, the *Sybillan Prophecies*. Now it were ſtrange if in theſe Authors there did not appear ſome kind of Reſemblance and Vicinity between the *Platonick Philoſophie* and the *Holy Scriptures*, ſeeing they had by all Artificial ways blended them together; as by coupling their different termes to expreſſe the ſame thing, for whereas the *Scripture* ſtiles the *firſt Perſon* of the *Trinity* [illegible], and *Plato* the firſt of his Trinity [illegible], they joyn'd them together, and call him [illegible], and as the *Second Perſon* is in Scripture termed [illegible], and in *Plato* [illegible], in theſe he is generally ſtiled [illegible]: Now they that knew nothing of the *Impoſture*, meeting with ſuch an *Artificial* agreement between *Platonick Notions* and *Chriſtian Doctrines*, might eaſily imagine that it was *natural*. The firſt Author of this miſtake ſeems to have been *Ammonious of Alexandria* (Father to that *Golden Chain* of Philoſophers of the *Sacred ſucceſſion*) who being both a *Chriſtian* and a *Platoniſt*, and lighting upon theſe *Spurious Books*, in which the *Platonick Notions* & *Chriſtian Articles* were blended & reconciled together, might thence be eaſily induced to fancy a true and real Conſonancy between them, And therefore *Patricius* avers that he was the firſt that underſtood aright the notion of *Plato*'s *Threefold Principle*, and that he came by

Panarch. lib. 9.

by this knowledge by perusing the *Books of Trismegistus*. And hence those Platonists that followed him might speak of the *Trinity* more consonantly to the Scripture, then perhaps they intended, though not long after these Impostures were discovered by *Porphyrie*, as himself relates in the *Life of Plotinus*.

For the second, the *Platonick Triad* is widely different from the *Christian*, for they intend by it so many *Orders* and *Ranks* of *Intellectuall Beings*, and frequently added a fourth, which was the *Humane Soul*, and set it at no greater distance from the Third, by which they meant the *Soul* of this *Universe*, then that was removed from the Second, by which they meant the *First mind* or soul of the *Immaterial World*. And their *Progresse* to the knowledge of these Beings proceeded in this Method.

1. They suppose all things to ascend by *Scales* to Unity, as *Plato* endeavours to prove in his *Parmenides*, [illegible] Unitie is the Origine of all Number, or all mix'd and compounded Beings must be at last resolved into some one simple and *unmix'd Principle*, otherwise the resolution would be endlesse, so that all blended and *Heterogeneous Perfections* both material and immaterial must of necessity exist somewhere simple and unmix'd. And then all *Immaterial Perfections* being found

found blended together in the *Humane Soul*, they concluded that as many degrees of Perfection as they could discover there, that there were so many *Ranks* of superior and more *homogeneall Beings* in the *Intellectuall world*. The Soul therefore (as they apprehended) consisting of four parts, must have the fourth Rank in the order of *Intellectuall Beings*, and by consequence there must be *three superior Orders* more simple and uncompounded, which must by several steps as farre exceed each other, as the loweſt order surmounts the Soul, to the higheſt whereof must of neceſſity agree pure and meer *simplicity*.

2. That which is the *supream Being*, and consequently the *first Author* of all other *Beings*, must of neceſſity be the higheſt perfection, and contain in it self all the *Excellency* and *Accomplishments* of all its *Productions*, and yet by vertue of the former maxime it can be but one simple and uncompounded perfection, and therefore to find out its *Nature*, they consider with themselves what one *Simple Perfection* is so absolute and transcendent as to comprehend all others; and at length conclude that *Goodneſſe* is the most consummate and most entirely compleat Perfection conceivable, and therefore that the most simple and unmixt *Goodneſſe* must be the *First Being*. Which as 'tis αὐτοαγαθὸν, *i. e. pure goodneſſe*, so it

is

is νοῦς i.e. meer *Unity* or rather *simplicity*, and has the same Relation to the other Beings, as Unity has to Number. Now they do not attribute the *Creation* and *Government* of the *world* to this *Being* we have already discovered, but to the *second Being*, for, say they, it could not flow from the *First*, unless the *Ideas* of all Things had resided in him, but then he could not have been *absolutely simple*, having such a *multiplicity of Ideas* within him. But *Ideas* lodging in the *Intellect*, the Second Being which was nothing but *Intellect* was not only capable of receiving them, but had in him as it were an *Ocean* of them, which flowing from him filled all *Possibilities of Being* with *actual Existencies*. Upon this account they stiled the [illegible] because it was not the immediate *Fountain* of Things, but only the *Cause* of that which was. And therefore I am apt to think that upon what *Rationalities* soever they pretend to introduce their νοῦς, that their first inducement to it was, that they might rise higher then *Anaxagoras* and those other *Philosophers*, that asserted no *Eternal* νοῦς to be the *First Being* and *First Cause* of all things.

3. *Intellect* or *Understanding* being the *Noblest Perfection* next to *Goodness*, the second thing must be simply and absolutely νοῦς, and being the *Supream Entity*, it must also be νοῦς, but

but becauſe 'tis compounded of *Intellect* and *Entity* 'tis ὄν only by *Participation*. And hence was ſtarted that nice Controverſy, whether is ſuperior *Ens* or *Unum*? The Earle of *Mirandula*'s Book *de Uno & Ente* is only a Diſpute againſt the *Platoniſts*, to prove *Unity* not ſuperior to *Entity*, becauſe they aſſert their Original and Uncreated μόνας to be the *Principle* of all *Beings*, whilſt it ſelf is ὑπερούσιος ἑνὰς, and therefore they will not permit you to terme it ἓν, but have invented that higher one of ὑπερουσία a *Nature* that is placed above *Eſſentiality*. But ſeeing (by the way) ἓν ſignifies nothing but the *Eſſence* or *Exiſtence* of the Thing, to which it is applyed, 'tis a groſſe Contradiction to deny it of any thing, that really exiſts, becauſe if it exiſts, it muſt ſurely be it ſelf, and if ſo, it may by conſequence with as great Propriety of ſpeech be denominated ἓν, as any thing elſe. But whatever that Term imports, the ſignification of ὑπερουσία is of neceſſity moſt uncertain and ambiguous, for no body underſtands how much ὑπὲρ advanceth the ſignification of οὐσία, and becauſe it may ſignifie any thing it does in effect ſignifie nothing, for an *indeterminate ſignification* is all one with an inſignificant one. And yet in this *Particle* conſiſts a great part of *myſterious ſublimity* of the ſuppoſititious and counterfeit *Areopagite*. But 'tis not my buſineſſe to confute but to repreſent

present their *Notions*, seeing therefore they will Place the *Supream Cause* of all ὑπερόντως οὐσίας; the *Second Being* in order which is νοῦς, must be τὸ ὂν κατ' ἐξοχὴν because it is πιστὸν τῶν ὄντων.

4. Their third Principle, which proceeds from the second as that from the first, is ψυχὴ, by which they understand nothing but the Soul of the Universe, and therefore usually stile it δημιουργία, as being the Architect of the World; and hence as they assert the τ' ἀγαθὸν or self originated Goodnesse to be κατ' αἰτίαν νοῦς *Casually Intellect*; and the νοῦς or First mind to be κατ' αἰτίαν ψυχὴ *Causally Soul*, so they make ψυχὴ to be κατ' αἰτίαν ὑλὴ καὶ κόσμος because 'tis the Cause of Matter and the Universe. I have already given you *Plato*'s wilde description of this Hypostasis; and therefore (especially because I begin to tire and faulter) I shall not trouble you with any farther account thereof, having sufficiently shewed the difference of the vulgar Doctrine of the Trinity from the Platonick Triad, and withall from what Principles and by what Reasonings the Platonists hap'ned to own and assert their Threefold Principle.

It were easie (*Sir*) to adde Infinite Considerations more but if these wherewith I have already presented you be material, I have said enough; if not, too much. Being therefore already tyred, I will not put my selfe to the trouble

&c.

Your most Faithfull

most Humble, and most

Affectionate Servant,

S. PARKER.

FINIS

NATURE and EXTENT OF THE DIVINE DOMINION and GOODNESSE, Especially as they refer to the ORIGENIAN HYPOTHESIS CONCERNING THE Preexistence of Souls,

TOGETHER

With a speciall Account of the vanity and groundlesnesse of the Hypothesis it self.

Being a second Letter Written to his much Honoured Friend and Kinsman Mr *Nath: Bisbie.*

By *SAM: PARKER* A. M. C. T: And fellow of the [illegible] Society.

[illegible] in the Universitie,

Imprimatur,

ROBERTUS SAY,

VICE-CANCELLARIUS

OXON.

SIR,

I Have now ſatisfied and perhaps ſurprix'd you too; for I queſtion not but theſe Papers will more prevent then anſwer your expectations: For when you remitted me to my own leaſure to ſatisfie your demands (the true import of a Friends deſires) I am confident you believed I ſhould as well uſe as acknowledge your Favour; and I really thought my next to you ſhould have been a Letter of thanks for your forbearance, and not a final diſcharge of my Obligations. But being ſhortly to bid adieu to my Retirements here, and fearing I ſhall no where elſe injoy ſo much Privacie and Leaſure; I could not ſatisfie my ſelf till I had gratified your expectations, and put my ſelf paſt all hazard of diſobeying your Commands. For methinks (Sir) nothing concerns me ſo much as thoſe deſignes that aſpire to ſerve my deareſt —— But my Buſineſſe is not to complement, and I foreſee how exceedingly I ſhall be ſtraightned in time, and therefore I muſt without the Ceremony of any farther Preface immediately apply my ſelf to the ſerious diſcharge of my Taske, which I ſhall (following the method your injunctions have pre-

ſcribed me) perform in three parts (1.) By giving you an account of the true Nature and Extent of Gods Dominion. (2.) By laying down a right Notion of his Goodneſſe. (3.) By proving the Groundleſneß and Vanity of the Origenian Hypotheſis concerning the Preexiſtence of Souls. Of each in their order.

OF

OF THE

NATVRE and EXTENT OF Gods Dominion.

BY Gods Dominion, I mean that Sovereigne Right and Authority residing in Him in reference to his Creatures, or that Power and Prerogative which he has to diſpoſe of them according to his own good-will and pleaſure, and this is indifferently expreſſed by theſe three terms of *Jus*, *Poteſtas*, and *Dominium*: The minute and preciſe differences whereof ſeem to lye herein; that *Jus* nakedly ſignifies a right or freedome to act, whereas the two latter imply, together with this, a power or ſtrength of acting; And then that Power, which God hath in himſelf antecedently to the Exiſtence of any Created Being, is in rigidneſſe and propriety of ſpeech call'd *Poteſtas*; but that which

he has and exerciſes ſince the Creation, *Dominium.* But not to inſiſt upon ſuch Niceties, they all promiſcuouſly import Dominion and Sovereignty. Of which many definitions have been attempted, but none of them ſeem to me more accurate and comprehenſive then Mr. *Hobs*'s, when he defines it to be *Libertas propriis facultatibus ſecundùm rectam rationem utendi.* Though what Exerciſes of Power are conſiſtent with right Reaſon, and what not, I ſhall diſcourſe anon. But if you fancy ſhort definitions, *'tis the lawful uſe of Power*; and ſo implies two things, firſt it ſuppoſes a power or ſtrength to Act, and then it imports the legitimate extent and uſe of it. Now as for the Extent of this Power, 'tis Infinite and Unconfined, as well as all the reſt of the Divine Perfections, and therefore it warrants God to do any thing that will comply with the Reputation of his other Attributes. Whence 'tis that the Beings and Subſiſtencies of all things are entirely at his diſpoſal: It was at his choice, whether he would ever or never create any thing; and it is ſtill in his Power either to continue the frame of things in the ſame ſtate they are in, or to erect a new one, and that better or worſe then the preſent, and any thing elſe, that is not inconſiſtent with the perfection of his Nature and Attributes. But for a fuller Evidence hereof, it is neceſ-

De Give. l. 1. c. 13.

ſary

ſary to obſerve that there is a twofold acceptation of *Right*, either more looſe, when it ſignifies a *Licence* and *Freedome* to do any thing; or more reſtrained, when it ſignifies an *Obligation* to do any thing: The difference between them is this, that the former ſignifies *Liberty*, and the latter *Duty*; that is extended to any thing that is not unlawfull, this only extends to things due, and requir'd by Juſtice and Equity: For inſtance, there is a Right to demand Debts, and a Right to pay them; the former may be done, becauſe no equity forbids it, but the latter muſt be done becauſe Juſtice requires it. Upon this account (to give you this Notion by the way) every man is bound to make good his Promiſes, though not his Threatnings and Puniſhments, becauſe promiſes make us Debtors, but in reference to threatned Penalties we are Creditors, for the Offendor owes the puniſhment to the perſon Offended: But though every man be bound to pay his Debts, yet he is not bound to demand them, for he has a Right to Relax as well as Challenge his due: The Rewards therefore conſequent upon promiſes, being Debts due from me, I am bound by the firſt ſort of Right to pay them, but the Penalties conſequent upon Threatnings, being Debts owing to me, I am permitted

by the ſecond ſort of Right, either to demand or remit them.

And thus there is a twofold Right in God, the one whereof referres to his Sovereignty, which is nothing but an abſolute Liberty to act or not to act, as Himſelf ſhall ſee cauſe; the other to his Juſtice and Holineſſe, whereby God is obliged to act ſuitably to the Eſſentiall Rules of Juſtice and Equity. For the Divine Juſtice is exerciſed only about things Good and Juſt, but his Dominion about all things that are not Evil or Unjuſt; things therefore being the Objects of Gods Dominion, not becauſe they are Juſt, but becauſe they are not Unjuſt, it is extended to every thing that is not contrary to Juſtice, *i.e.* to every thing that is not Evil. But I ſhall wave all general conſiderations, and onely conſider the Extent of the Divine Prerogative in reference to Mankind, not onely becauſe 'tis moſt pertinent to our preſent deſigne, but alſo becauſe what I ſhall diſcourſe concerning the Extent and Latitude of Gods Power over Men, may by Analogy of Reaſon, be applied to all other Creatures endued with Sense and Perception: Now, in Treating of this matter propoſed, I ſhall onely conſider,

1. *What God can do.*
2. *What he cannot do.*

1. Firſt, Then God has Power to take back from us all or part of what he has given us

us, *i. e.* He can either utterly deſtroy our Beings; or take from us ſo many Comforts of life, and inflict upon us ſo many Calamities, as ſhall leave us in a condition only preferable to that of Non-Exiſtence; for all that we have to render our conditions more valuable then *not Being*, is the free Product of the Divine Power; But 'tis a certain and undoubted truth that every Superiour Authority has Power to Revoke all the free Iſſues of its own Power, unleſſe it have abridg'd it ſelf from the Exerciſe thereof by ſome ſpecial compact or promiſe: For compact and promiſe lay an obligation upon him that makes it, and veſts a Right in the Perſon to whom 'tis made; and therefore where Benefits are beſtowed without theſe Inſtruments or conveying Right, there the Donor has the ſame Right to withdraw, as he had to give them; and therefore that God, who has given us our Beings, has full Power arbitrariouſly to deſtroy them.

But here it will be Objected, that deſtroying the life of a guiltleſſe perſon, is juſtly accounted the moſt ſalvage and unmerciful piece of Injuſtice in the World; that 'tis almoſt the only Inſtance, which carries in it an undeniable Iniquity antecedent to all Humane Lawes and Sanctions. So that when Mr. *Hobs* aſſerts that in the State of Nature, there could be no Injuries and Violences acted amongſt

Men, becauſe they could not have a right of Propriety in any thing, before they had by mutual Compacts apportion'd each man's ſhare, if he had limited his aſſertion to poſſeſſions of Lands, and all other Proprieties Forreigne to a man's own perſon, it had been equally true and blameleſſe; for Nature doth not aſſign this Moiety to *Titius*, and that to *Caius*, but leaves us to ſhare the Earth among our ſelves, and to Encloſe what ſhe had left in Common, into particular proprieties, as we ſhall agree among our ſelves. But when he extends the forementioned aſſertion to the perſons of Men, his Errour is as palpable as 'tis miſchievous, becauſe every man has a right and propriety in himſelf Antecedently to all Law and Compact. There needs no Covenant to appoint that I ſhall have a propriety in my own perſon; nay, 'tis as impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe, as that I ſhould alienate my ſelf from my ſelfe; and all the grants of all the men in the World cannot Veſt me in a greater propriety to my ſelfe then Nature has, becauſe they cannot make me to be more my ſelfe then I already am; ſo that though I were in Mr. *Hob*'s Natural State of War, if he or any other man ſhould take away my life without juſt cauſe, he would do

do me at leaſt as evident an Injury, as if he ſhould now, either by Fraud or Violence, thruſt me from mine Inheritance, to which I have an unqueſtionable Right, both by his own conſent, and the Lawes of that Civil Society, of which we are Members; the reaſon is, becauſe he will Rob me of that, in which I have as clear a Right and Propriety, as tis poſſible for me to have in any thing that depends upon Pact or Covenant. Well then, it being thus Evident that to take away the Life of an Innocent perſon, is among men a moſt Enormous and Inhumane piece of Injuſtice, and that antecedently to all poſitive Sanctions and Contracts, why ſhould it not be ſo in reference to God, the Rules of Equity being the ſame to all, Eternal, Unalterable, and abſtract from all Perſons, States and Relations?

To which I anſwer, that notwithſtanding there are the ſame general Rules, and Principles of Juſtice in reference to God, as to Men, that yet the particular Inſtances are not the ſame; becauſe Gods Relation to the Creatures being infinitely different from that, which they bear to each other, the particular Actions and Diſplays of his Juſtice, though meaſured by the ſame Rule, muſt needs be of a widely different Nature, not becauſe the Meaſure is changeable, but becauſe the relation

tion of the Perſons ſuffers variety and alteration: For God being the Supream Sovereign and Cauſe of all, has upon that Account power to deprive any, or all of his Creatures of what Perfections and Endowments he pleaſes, whereas the Creatures not having any natural Dominion over one another, they cannot take away from their fellow creatures any thing which God has given them, without manifeſt Robbery, unleſſe in ſuch caſes where the Supream Lord has been pleaſed to communicate any part of his Power and Dominion. And ſo in humane Societies, though there are the ſame *Lawes* of Juſtice in reference to all men, yet there are not alwayes the ſame *Inſtances*; for though it be granted, that every man has by right of Nature a power of puniſhing any one that injures him, yet having entred into Societies, either by God's Inſtitution, or their own Conſent, or both, the exerciſe of this power is devolved upon ſome peculiar perſons whom we call Magiſtrates, in whoſe hands every man has for the common good depoſited his *Authoritative Rights*; its upon that account juſt and lawful for the Magiſtrate to puniſh and take away Delinquents, but unjuſt for the private perſon to do the ſame; for that were to Uſurp that Authority, which I have granted away to them (unleſs in caſes of neceſſity, as when

I am aſſaulted by another, and have no other way to preſerve my own Life, then by deſtroying my Aſſailants, there the Commonwealth is preſumed to allow me to exerciſe my natural right my ſelf) but where no ſuch neceſſity urges, there the Governours of the Society, in which I am, & to whom I have paſſed away the Exerciſes of my *Original-Right*, are to Execute Juſtice for me: ſo that private perſons, not having power to puniſh Criminals, as Magiſtrates have, that action would be judged Murder in thoſe, which is accounted Juſtice in theſe, notwithſtanding that they are both ſubject to the ſame common Rules and Maximes of Equity.

Duo cum idem faciunt ſæpe, ut poſſis dicere
Hoc licet impune facere huic, illi non licet;
Non quod diſſimilis res eſt, ſed is qui facit.

And thus there being ſo manifeſt a diſproportion between God and Men, in reference to their propriety in, and dominion over the life of man; God may have a right to act that, which no Creature can do without the groſſeſt and moſt exorbitant Injuſtice: for ſeeing that propriety, which every Man has in himſelf, is held from the free gift of our Supream Lord, and that not confined by any Promiſe or Covenant, he may cancel and reverſe

verſe it when he pleaſes, onely by taking back what he has given. And if we could ſtand in the ſame relation to, or dependance on any creature, as we do to Him, that Creature would have as great a right to deveſt us of the propriety we have in our own Eſſences, as God himſelf has; but becauſe the former can never be ſuppoſed, that's the reaſon the latter can never happen.

2. This Power and Dominion, which God has over an Innocent perſons life, and all its appendant priviledges, may be exerciſed by occaſion of another man's ſin, for what God has power to do abſolutely, he may certainly do upon any occaſion, for this is onely to make uſe of the Inſtances of his Dominion, to ſerve other deſignes of his Providence. Thus God threatens to *Viſit the Iniquity of the Fathers upon the Children, unto the third and fourth Generation*, *i.e.* to

Exod. 20. verſ. 5.

puniſh the Impieties of wicked Parents, by bringing their Poſterity into thoſe evill Circumſtances, into which he might have brought them by virtue of his Supream Dominion, though not onely themſelves, but their Progenitors had been faultleſſe. The poſterity of *Cham* was conſign'd to ſlavery for their Father's impiety. Seaventy thouſand men expiated *Davids* folly; and *Sauls* ſons were hanged for their Fathers perfidiouſneſs; and the

ſin

ſin of *Ahab* was viſited upon his Children. Scripture ſupplies us with infinite more inſtances, where God makes uſe of the Sons infelicity to puniſh the Fathers ſin, in which caſes God onely makes his Soveraignty miniſter to the deſigns of Juſtice, and if it be lawful, as I have proved it is, for God to exerciſe his Supream Dominion *abſolutely*, ſurely it cannot be unlawful to do it with *reſpect* to other ends of Providence. And ſuch was the Origine of all the common miſeries of mankind: God created man at firſt in a more perfect and happy ſtate, but upon occaſion of *Adams* prevarication, he deveſted all mankind of a great part of thoſe priviledges and perfections, with which he had endued humane nature; And all this God might have done, though *Adam* had never ſinned, and therefore tis no Injuſtice that God has made his Poſterity the Heirs of his miſfortunes. The conſtitution of *Adams* body was probably ſo regular and harmonious, that it had no natural propenſions contrary to thoſe of his mind, but was entirely ſubject to all the Dictates of his underſtanding, his Organs clear and well-diſpoſed, his Spirits briſk and active, his Humours ſpirituous and oylie; the ferments of his body regular and ſteady in their motions, and not infected with thoſe malignant tinctures, that

that hurry us into all manner of exorbitant paſſions and appetites. The Earth was fruitfull, and of its own accord, brought forth all ſorts of wholeſome and pleaſant Fruits: Man was ſurrounded with pleaſures and delights, and had nothing elſe to do but to take his eaſe and enjoy them. But when *Adam* fell, God diſrob'd him of moſt of thoſe great and happy Priviledges, and caſt him into a condition of life uneaſie and troubleſome. Now our bodies are unactive, ſickly, and indiſpoſed, and inſtead of being Inſtruments to the actings of the mind, are the greateſt lets and hindrances; Paradice is turned into a Wilderneſſe, the Earth is barren and accurſed, and man muſt earn his bread by the ſweat of his brows, & this has ever ſince been the condition of Mankind: And though this be a ſad ſtory, yet after all theſe loſſes, our condition is ſtill competently, or rather extreamly happy, for beſides that, if we will but be conſiderate, and live by the uſe of our rational faculties, we may enjoy contentment enough in this world, to render our lives pleaſant and comfortable; God has prepared for us moſt exquiſite and raviſhing delights in the next, only if we will forbear to purſue our Brutiſh Appetites, from which he hath afrighted us by the fearfuleſt threatnings, and reſolve to follow the dictates of Reaſon and Sobriety, to which we are encouraged

couraged by the biggeſt Rewards and Promiſes; ſo that notwithſtanding all the preſent weakneſſes and imperfections of our natures, a man muſt be prodigiouſly abſurd and ſottiſh to make himſelf miſerable. And if men will chooſe to be wicked and miſerable, againſt all the Principles of Reaſon and Intereſt, they have no Reaſon to blame the Condition of their Natures for that, which proceeds purely from the choice of their Wills. So that though God has puniſhed the Prevarication of *Adam*, by the evill Condition of all his poſterity, yet he has done nothing unjuſt, becauſe he might have placed us all in the ſame Condition, though neither *Adam* nor our ſelves had prevaricated his Sanctions.

And this is no more then what is in ſome inſtance or other practiſed in all Commonwealths. As in *England* every man holding his Eſtate of the King, and the right of all Tenures being derived from his Grant with certain Conditions, if any of the *Grantees* fail in the performance of the Conditions on their part, the *Grantor* may juſtly diſpoſſeſſe both them and their Heirs of their Eſtates. Thus if any Perſon be convicted of Treaſon againſt the Crown, he is thereupon attainted, and not only his Eſtate eſcheats to the King as ſupream Lord, but his Blood too is corrupted, ſo that his Poſterity are not capable of Inheritance

ritance, as deriving no inheritable blood, and consequently no Right from him. In which case he that should have been next Heir cannot justly think himself injured by being deprived of his Inheritance; although himself had not by any misdemeanor forfeited it, he having no right to it, but what was derived from his Ancestors, and that being rescinded by breach of those Conditions, upon which it was suspended, he can with no more equity claim a right in the Fee, then he could though his Ancestors had never been vested in it. And thus that Entaile of Priviledges, which God of his free goodnesse had settled upon *Adam* and his Heirs for ever, upon condition of their Obedience to his Laws, was by the disobedience of *Adam* cut off from himself and all his Posterity.

3. The Rights of Gods Dominion over sinlesse Creatures, do not extend so far as to warrant his dooming them to a condition more wretched and forlorn then *Non-existence*. That he has power to reduce them into a state not worse then Not-being is already proved, but farther he cannot go without transgressing all the lines of Goodnesse and Equity, because if he should, he would rob his Creatures of more then he had ever given them; And if this would not be an injurious Cruelty, I must challenge all the world to tell me what would.

This

This Assertion is level'd against those men, who are so hardy as to say that God might, to shew the uncontroulableness of his Sovereignty, have decreed infinite myriads of faultless Creatures to endless and insupportable Torments. That ever such Thoughts could enter into the minds of men! For what can we imagine more repugnant to all the notions of goodness and equity then to be the deliberate and sole Author of the biggest misery to an innocent and harmless Person? What more Heavenly wide from the nature of true Goodness? Tis a malice so meer and abstracted, that it can reside no where but in the Breasts of Fiends and Devils; nay tis the blackest Part of their natures, and that very ingredient which makes them what they are. Besides, how can God be glorified in the eternal miseries of guiltless Creatures? How can their undeserved damnation be conducive to his Interests? How can their unmerited torments gratifie infinite goodness, or adde to infinite happiness? Could he promote his own real Felicity by the Infelicities of an innocent Creature, yet we cannot imagine him so selfish-spirited as to effect it, much less for the meer ostentation of his greatness. If God can damn his Creatures to magnifie the absoluteness of his Dominion, why do we raile at Tyrants & Devils, when they

upon the ſame account take pleaſures in the miſeries of others? Nay there never was any Tyrant ſo ſalvage, as to pleaſe himſelf in the endleſſe and moſt exquiſite Tortures of an harmleſſe Infant? Tis the property of Devils (whoſe malice is boiled up to an infinite rancor and cruelty) to make anothers torment their pleaſure, and to do miſchief for miſchiefs ſake; And ſhall we faſten that upon God, which is the Devils Reproach? ſhall he contrive Miſchief, feed and recreate upon Miſery, and glut his vengeance with Innocent blood? Shall he that delights not in the Death of Sinners, ſeek pleaſure and Glory in the Eternal Miſeries of Innocents? This is the very top and extremity of Cruelty; ſo that were it thus, we muſt adde Cruelty to the Divine Attributes, and believe him as Infinite in that, as in any other.

Beſides all this, meer *Exiſtence* without *Perception* carries in it no more Goodneſſe or Happineſſe then *Non-exiſtence*, and is onely deſireable before it in reference to thoſe *Perceptive Capacities*, which are founded in it: Tis all one not to be, and to be in a ſtate of ſenſeleſſe inactivity; take away Perception, and 'tis indifferent whether the ſubſtance remain or utterly periſh; as ſuppoſe the Poets *Metamorphoſes* had been as great Realities as they were Fictions, it had been indifferent to the perſons

Perſons that ſuffered them, whether they were chang'd into Trees, Stones and Flowers, or into nothing, and it would have been the ſame thing to *Niobe* whether ſhe were petrified or annihilated. Upon this account aroſe that ancient Diſpute, *Whether never to have been born had not been better then to be?* For they conſidering onely the preſent Stage of Affaires, where the meaſures of good and evill ſeeme to be diſpenſed in equall proportions, were doubtfull which way to determine, but thoſe of them who thought the world to be more repleniſh'd with ungratefull and diſpleaſing objects then the contrary, preferred *Non-exiſtence*, the chiefe aſſertors whereof were ſome of the melancholy Philoſophers, ſuch as *Heraclitus* and *Empedocles*, together with the *Tragedians*, who in the Perſons of forlorne and miſerable men are full of little ſentences and diſcourſes to this purpoſe, and this opinion was ſo ancient, *ut Author & Initium illius* Mic. l. 1. *prorſus ignoretur*, as Gaſſendus aſſerts. c. 1.

But they, who with more truth, counted the world was fuller of pleaſures then miſeries, did with more ſatisfaction eſteem their exiſtence a priviledge, ſo that they preferred not *exiſtence* before *non-exiſtence* upon its own ſcore, but upon the accounts of thoſe pleaſant perceptions that are founded in it. Well then, it being evident that exiſtence is good

or evill onely in order to the perceptions that are founded in it, where 'tis the basis of nothing but tormenting Perception, and where the continuance of life is nothing elſe but the continuance of miſery, there 'tis the greateſt, becauſe 'tis the fountaine of all miſeries. So that if God can create a Being onely to make it miſerable, and condemne it to the Regions of ſadneſſe and eternall darkneſſe, his creation would be ſo farre from being any kind of benefit, that it would be the greateſt ill-turn or injury he could poſſibly act. Nay, this ſtill raiſes the Cruelty, in that rather then want an object for it, he would make one, and ſet infinite power on work only to exerciſe an infinite crueltie, and manifeſt himſelf as abſolute in Tyranny, as he is almighty in Power. From all this I ſuppoſe 'tis unqueſtionably evident, that for God to Create an innocent Creature to make it everlaſtingly miſerable would be the higheſt act of cruelrie imaginable.

And this (by the way) may diſcover the Vanity of that vulgar Controverſy of the Schooles, viz. *whether is beſt, Not to be, or to be miſerable:* for if Exiſtence be deſireable only in order to thoſe capacities of Pleaſure and Happineſſe that are founded in it, and be meerly upon this ſcore preferable before Non-exiſtence, then tis not to be laid in the ballance with the Perceptions of Pleaſure and Miſery;

for

for if it carry in it ſelf neither Good nor Evill, then tis eaſie to determine that it cannot counterballance the Evill of Miſery, becauſe tis in its own nature indifferent, and is inclined to Good or Evill onely by its proportions of Miſery and Happineſſe; but certainly what is not at all either good or evill, cannot poſſibly carry in it more degrees of Goodneſs, then there are of Evill in pain and miſery, ſeeing this is abſolutely evill, but that not at all good. And whatever exiſts, is either void of ſenſe and perceptive Faculties, and then its Exiſtence makes it capable of no more Happineſs, then it had before it commenced its Being: or if it be endued with perceptive Powers and Appetites, then theſe are either gratified with ſuitable Objects, which renders their Exiſtence good and deſirable; or tormented either by want of ſatisfaction from their proper Objects, or by the Senſation of ungrateful and diſpleaſing ones; which makes their Exiſtence full of nothing but Sadneſs and Miſery, and utterly refuſable. If therefore any man would examine whether the Condition of his *Being* be more deſirable then *Not-Being*, he muſt ſet aſide his bare and naked Exiſtence as neither Good nor Evill, and only weigh his Pleaſures againſt his Miſery; and by the Over-proportion of one of them, he may rate the value of himſelf; for

if his delights weigh down his Calamities, then is his Being more valuable then Non-exiſtence; but if his Miſeries be more and greater then his Pleaſures, tis more eligible to be rid of thoſe, then to continue them for the enjoyment of theſe, and better want a little Pleaſure, then ſuffer much Miſery. But to thinke 'tis more deſireable to live in everlaſting Torments without any mixture of Pleaſure, then to be utterly defac'd out of Being, is a conceit ſo infinitely wild and enormous, that it could not have found the leaſt entertainment in the Thoughts of any men, who had not preingaged their utmoſt Zeal and Induſtry in defence of the groſſeſt and moſt horrid of Opinions, it being invented purely as a ſhift that might help to make out the Equity of abſolute and irreſpective Reprobation. But to return to the Subject of my preſent diſcourſe.

It was long ſince obſerved, that there was never any opinion ſo abſurd, which was not maintain'd by ſome of the antient Philoſophers, but yet there are not to be found among them any ſuch hateful ſentiments concerning Gods tranſactions with his Creatures, as this I am diſcourſing againſt, which carries in it ſuch apparent contradictions to the Divine Attributes, that it could never have found entrance into the mindes of men, had they not

not thought it was ſuggeſted to them by Revelation: for the onely thing that is pleaded on its behalfe is the groſly miſtaken Ninth Chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, which they apply to Gods eternal Decrees, although nothing can be more apparent then that it treats of a quite different matter; For Saint *Paul* having diſcourſed of the univerſal Apoſtacy of both Jewes and Gentiles, from the practiſe of true goodneſſe; and of God's merciful deſignments to pardon and receive them all into favour, ſo they would be content to obtain it that way which he hath made known to the World by Jeſus Chriſt, and not by the works of the *Moſaick Law*; and alſo that many of the Gentiles had accepted of the conditions *propoſed* to them in the *Goſpel*, and therefore that if the Jewes ſhould perſevere in their obſtinate adherence to the Moſaick Diſpenſation, God would caſt them off, and take in the Gentiles for his favourites: Saint *Paul* having, I ſay, diſcourſed of theſe things in the fore-going Chapters, he here ſuppoſes this would ſeem very ſtrange and abſurd to his Countrymen that God ſhould caſheire his peculiar darling Nation, upon whom he had beſtowed ſo many ſignal priviledges; *To whom pertaineth the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenants, &c.* To which he anſwers that the ſupream Soveraign was not tyed to any

culiar Nation, but that he could adopt whom he pleaſed to be his favourites, and that though the Jewes had been bleſt with greater advantages then the Gentiles, yet notwithſtanding God might diſcard them, and take in theſe; as he had made the Iſraelites his peculiar People rather then the Edomites, notwithſtanding they were of the younger Family, *&c.* And that this is the genuine ſcope of Saint *Pauls* diſcourſe is unexceptionably evident from its concluſion, *verſ.* 30, 31, 32. *What ſhall we ſay then? that the Gentiles which followed not after Righteouſneſſe, have attained to the Righteouſneſſe which is of faith: But Iſrael, which followed after the Law of Righteouſneſſe, hath not attained to the Law of Righteouſneſſe. Wherefore? becauſe they ſought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the Law.* Now what can be more clear, then that he ſpeaks of the rejecting of the Jewes, becauſe of their obſtinate adherence to the Moſaick Law, and of the calling of the Gentiles becauſe of their Faith and cloſing with the Goſpel. But if you would ſee this improved to the ſtrength and evidence of a Demonſtration, you need only be at the pains to read over *Epiſcopius* his Paraphraſe upon the Chapter.

Before I conclude, I will endeavour a little more fully to illuſtrate and confirm my foregoing Propoſitions by a brief Arbitration of

of a late fiercely argued diſpute, *viz.* What is the True Ground of Gods Sovereignty over man. For ſome *Epiſcopius, Curcellæus, &c.* aſſert that it Bottoms upon the Benefit of Creation; thereby the better to Controule that horrid Opinion, that aſſerts, God might have made a Creature to no other purpoſe, than to make it Eternally miſerable, only to ſhew the Almightineſſe of his Sovereignty; for (ſay they) God cannot exerciſe more Sovereignty over his Creatures, then he has, but he cannot have Right to more then he has given, and therefore the utmoſt of his Right is to deſtroy what he has made; but if he ſhould afflict an Innocent creature with Eternal puniſhments, he would goe beyond the Right he has acquired by its Creation; becauſe he would thereby take away more then he has given, and place his Creature in a worſe Condition then that of Non Exiſtence, in which he found it. Now becauſe the benefits beſtowed by God upon his Creatures are finite, they infeare that his Sovereignty reſulting from them muſt be finite and limited, and therefore that they have a Right, of which God cannot Rob them without Violence and Injury. But others ground the Divine Dominion upon the irreſiſtibleneſſe of his Power, thereby to juſtifie *Calvin, and Mr. Hobs.*

that

that Right (or Tyranny) they have faſtned upon Him, arbitrariouſly to Reprobate and Damne his Innocent Creatures. For, ſay they, Power Irreſiſtible juſtifies all actions really and properly in whomſoever it be found, and therefore ſuch Power being in God onely, it without other helps is ſufficient Juſtification of any Action He doth; ſo that if He had from all Eternity conſign'd infinite Myriads of innocent Creatures to Eternal flames, the uncontrouleableneſſe of His Omnipotence would have made good the Equity of ſuch a mercileſſe Decree. And therefore they reſolve the Maxime, that God cannot Sin, not into his Holineſſe but Power, His very doing a thing never ſo Injurious and Irregular, and that antecedently to all Law, making it juſt, and conſequently no ſin.

But for my part, I think both of them are evidently miſtaken; the former in their Principles, and the latter in their Concluſions. To the firſt therefore I reply, that it is apparent that the Divine Right and Dominion over the Creatures could not be founded upon the *Benefits of Creation*, but upon the abſolute unlimitedneſſe of his Power, becauſe God was from all Eternity inveſted with a Power of doing any thing that was not misbecoming his Divine Perfections, and therefore He acquired not any new Right from his Creation, but only

ly made Objects to exercise his Eternal right upon. I confesse there is a Power acquired by benefits, where there is none antecedently, because they bestow an ἀρχὴ or *Preheminence* upon him that gives above him that receives them; but God being alwayes infinitely perfect, could not acquire any new *Excellence* from the Worlds Creation, and therefore the collation of Benefits cannot beget any new Power in Him; because the Power which He had antecedently to all his Benefits, was not capable of being made greater; for He alwaies had a Power to Act any thing that lay within the bounds of just and lawful; but his Power since the Creation is not more then so, and therefore he acquired no new Prerogative by it. And then, if the Creatures should have a right to any thing, of which God cannot deprive them, they would have something of their own, to which God has no Right: But seeing every Creature is entirely Gods, and can have nothing which is not His gift, and can do nothing which is not His debt; it cannot have a Right where God has none, because He cannot but have an entire Right in his own Works. And therefore if in any thing Gods Supream Sovereignty seems confined, tis not bounded by any Rights or Priviledges in the Creature, but onely regulated by His own Perfections.

And

And this brings me to the latter ſort, who ground God's Dominion in the Almightineſs of his Power, and infer thence, that He may do any thing though never ſo Injurious and Irregular. I allow their Principle, but deny their Inference, becauſe God is eſſentially Good and Juſt as well as Powerful; take away his Juſtice and his Goodneſſe, and you take away his Divinity, without them he would be but an Almighty Devil. And therefore, though the Rights of Gods Power be not ſtreightned by any External obligation, (becauſe that is tied on by a Superiour Authority, and ſo cannot agree to him whoſe Prerogative is Supream,) yet they are bounded by an Internal Principle, for God's goodneſſe may be ſaid to tye and reſtrain him not to do any thing repugnant to it ſelf. Now this is not properly a Reſtraint or Confinement ſuperinduced upon his Natural right, but is rather a circumſcription ſet and choſe by himſelf, which he cannot Tranſgreſſe becauſe he will not. Neither does it limit the Divine Prerogative any more then his Omnipotence is limited, becauſe he cannot do any thing that is abſurd, and unworthy the Wiſdom of his Underſtanding, or ſinful & repugnant to the Purity of his Will: For as he cannot do ſuch things, not becauſe his Power is not Infinite, but becauſe his Wiſdom and Holineſs are ſo; (for its not from

from defect of Power, but from the Infiniteneſſe of his other Perfections, that He cannot act any thing that's either Sinful or Fooliſh, ſo neither is it for want of Sovereignty, that he cannot do any thing Indecent or Tyrannical; but becauſe he is infinitely Holy as well as Powerful, he is thereby obliged to do nothing unbeſeeming his Holineſſe. And therefore that God cannot Tyrannize, tis not becauſe his Power has limits, but becauſe his Goodneſſe has none. And ſo the Divine Will is the Meaſure of Juſtice, not becauſe its abſolutely Sovereigne, but becauſe its infinitely good, and that whatſoever God wills or does, is therefore juſt, becauſe he wills it, derives not from the Sovereignty, but from the goodneſſe of his will. For if this be taken away, tis all one whether you call him God or Devil, he may lye, and forſwear, and act all the Villanies in the world, and then what a brave condition is Mankind in, ſo repugnant to all the principles of piety, honeſty, and policy, is that opinion, that allows no eſſential Juſtice and Injuſtice, but derives all Goodneſs from arbitrary Power.

Of the Nature of the Divine Goodneſſe.

HAving briefly explain'd the Nature and full Extent of Gods Sovereign Prerogative,

gative, we come in the next place to give an account of his Goodneſſe and Benignity; of which Attribute we muſt be careful to aſſign ſuch a notion as is not inconſiſtent with the former: Chiefly becauſe the Idea of God ſeems mainly to conſiſt in Dominion and Sovereignty; The notion of him in Scripture never referring to his Eſſence, but alwayes to his Power and Empire; and the names by which he is there expreſſed do not ſo much denote his Nature, as his Supream and Almighty Prerogative: for all his Appellatives (except *Jah* and *Jehovah*, which expreſs his conſtancy and veracity) import only a Supream and Almighty Sovereign; ſo that the Scripture repreſents God under no other notion, then as the Supream Lord and Sovereign of the Univerſe; and therefore we muſt be wary of attributing any thing to him, that either leſſens or quite deſtroys the freedom and uncontroulableneſſe of his Dominion, and may withall conclude, that no property which complies not with it can be attributed to him, and conſequently that that's a falſe notion of his Goodneſſe, that interferes with his Dominion. And therefore they that aſſert Gods goodneſs to be a neceſſary Agent, that cannot but do that which is beſt, and ſo make all the Divine actions the neceſſary reſults of his goodneſs, directly ſupplant, and deſtroy all

all the rights of his Power and Dominion: For if all the effects of Gods power be the natural Emanations of his Goodnesse, and depend not upon the free determinations of his Will, it will follow that God can have no liberty or dominion in relation to them, because necessity is altogether inconsistent with the liberty or freedome of Sovereign power; Sovereignty bottoming upon a liberty and freedom of acting; For how can he that has no Power and Dominion over his own Actions, have power over any one else, for in that there can be no power without a liberty to use and exercise it, nor any exercise of power but by acting it, it necessarily follows that Agent that has no liberty or freedom of acting, is utterly uncapable of any Power or Dominion. And therefore if all God's actions were the necessary Emanations of his Goodnesse, it must necessarily destroy all the rights and liberties of his Sovereignty and Dominion.

The *Platonists* assert, that Gods infinite goodnesse necessitates him to do alwayes that which is best, Θέμας δὲ οὔτ' ἦν οὔτ' ἔστι τῷ ἀρίστῳ δρᾶν ἄλλο πλὴν τὸ κάλλιστον, (sayes *Plato*) in Timæo. and therefore that all the Divine works were produced by an irresistable necessity, and that he had no more power not to do what he has done, then the Sun has to withhold his influences, or an overflowing fountain to keep back

its

its ſtreams. And upon this foundation they erect any Hypotheſes that ſute with their own fancies, but chiefly that of the Pre-exiſtence of Souls: Becauſe (ſay they) 'tis better they ſhould Pre-exiſt, and therefore Divine goodneſſe, which does alwayes that which is beſt, muſt of neceſſity have given them a better and happier ſtate of life and ſelf-enjoyment, before they deſcended into theſe bodies. But theſe mens minds are ſo exceſſively poſſeſſed with thoughts of Gods goodneſſe, as to neglect all his other Attributes, advancing it to ſuch an exorbitant Preheminence, as to make it not only Uſurp upon, and invade the Rights and Priviledges of other Attributes, but alſo to baniſh all other Perfections from the Divine nature, and engroſſe the Deity wholly to it ſelf. For this notion of Gods goodneſſe is moſt apparently inconſiſtent, not only with his Power and Dominion, but with all his other moral Perfections. But in order to a further ſatisfaction herein, I ſhall give you a brief account of the Divine goodneſſe, and ſhew it to be not a neceſſary, but a free and ſelf-moving Agent.

The Divine goodneſſe then is of three ſorts, either as 'tis taken for the perfection of his nature, or for the ſanctity and holineſſe of his mind, or for the free bounty and beneficence of his will; Though the two latter are properly

properly but branches of the former; Juſtice and Beneficence being abſolutely neceſſary to the Infinite perfection of the Divine nature. The firſt ſort I ſhall omit to diſcourſe of, as being impertinent to our preſent purpoſe, and only account for the two laſt, and firſt of the former.

Gods Sanctity or Holineſſe, is that natural or eſſential Goodneſſe, whereby he cannot but act ſuitably to the excellence and dignity of his Rational nature: For the dignity of the Divine nature, conſiſting in Reaſon and Wiſdome, this is preferred the meaſure and rule of his Actions; and therefore *'tis nothing elſe but that natural Juſtice, Equity and Rectitude, whith is the meaſure of all Gods tranſactions with his Creatures, and conſiſts in doing every thing that right Reaſon requires, and not doing any thing, that it forbids.* Now the Relation this Goodneſſe has to the Divine Dominion, is to bound and regulate it in the exerciſe of its Rights and Liberties; becauſe God has power to do any thing not inconſiſtent with it; ſo that the true way to find out how farre the Divine Prerogative extends, is to diſcover what is repugnant to the Nature of goodneſſe and equity; for every thing beſide is ſubject to the free diſpoſall of the Divine Will. Thus God cannot delight in the eternall miſeries and calamities

of Innocent Creatures, he cannot ſecretly reſolve and take care that his creatures ſhall act thoſe Impieties, which himſelf openly hates, forbids and threatens: he cannot lay upon us Impoſſible Commandements: he cannot violate his Faith, and not perform his Promiſes, Oaths, and Covenants, becauſe they are all of them eſſentially evill, and contrary to the Natural and Eternal Lawes of Equity and Right Reaſon.

But *Goodneſſe*, as its Equivalent with Benignity, Bounty, or Benificence, *is a free, conſtant and habitual propenſion of will to do Good.* And being ſeated in the Divine Will as one of its main Properties, it muſt not be ſuppoſed to deſtroy the freedome of its Nature, but rather to participate of it. For the Divine will is endued with the higheſt kind of Libertie, as it imports a freedome not onely from Forreign Violence, but alſo from inward neceſſity; For ſpontaneity or immunity from coaction without indifferency carryes in it as great neceſſity as thoſe motions, that proceed from violence or mechaniſme: and a Beaſt, that of its own accord goes to Paſture, would have as much Freedom as *God* has, if his actions were only ſpontaneous, and proceeded not from a chooſing and ſelf-determining Principle. And therefore when I aſſert the Divine will to be Free, I mean that *it is a rationall and*

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Active Faculties, that has Power and Dominion over its own actions, and that can be determined only by its own intrinſick energie, in ſo much that all the externall incentives requiſite to its acting being ſuppoſed, it yet remains ſo indifferent and undetermined in it ſelf, as that it is able either to exert or ſuſpend its action. For unleſſe the divine will enjoy this kind of freedome, it had as good have none at all, all other ſorts of Libertie being fettered and determined by fatall Neceſſities. And the Fataliſts do but looſe their Labour, when they endeavour to invent wayes of reconciling Liberty with Neceſſity, unleſſe they can alſo make Indifferency conſiſtent with it; becauſe all neceſſity of what nature ſoever implies a determin'd and unavoidable Fatalitie, which apparently deſtroys all the foundations of Religion and Moralitie; For neceſſity is not inconſiſtent with moral Goodneſſe, becauſe 'tis of this or that ſort, but ſimply becauſe 'tis neceſſity: for the only cauſe why a neceſſary Agent is not capable of Moralitie, is becauſe 'tis not able to determine it ſelf to Good or Evil, and conſequently not capable of being directed and governed by Lawes, Rewards and Puniſhments. For what other reaſon can there be imagined, why any Agent is incapable of being thus governed, then that it has no power

and command over its own Actions, the Office of Lawes being to enjoyn them, to whom they are preſcribed, that they determine themſelves to act according to their Preſcriptions? But to require this of a principle void of any ſuch power of ſelf determination, is as abſurd as to require it of Stones and Trees, becauſe the abſurdity of both conſiſts in requiring obedience, where there is no principle or capacity able to render it. And therefore unleſs they can reconcile neceſſity and indifferency ſo, as that the ſame Principle ſhall be neceſſarily determin'd to one extream, and yet remain ſo indifferent, as to be able, if it pleaſe, to determine it ſelf to the other, it will be altogether fruitleſſe to make other ſorts of liberty not inconſiſtent with neceſſity. But this they can never do, unleſſe they can bring the extreams of a contradiction together, and make it all one to be determined and undetermined in reference to the ſame Action. Thus (for Inſtance) that Principle that is endued with no other Liberty, then what conſiſts in meer ſpontaneity and immunity from violence, is, without indifferency and a power of ſelf-determination, at as great a diſtance from moral Good or Evill, as it would be, if it were acted meerly by external force and violence, becauſe the reaſon why that which is moved only by force, is not a principle capable

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of morality, is becauſe it has no power at all over its own motion, and ſo is moved with a fatall and unalterable neceſſity, but a ſpontaneous or unforced Action, if it proceed not from an indifferent but neceſſary Agent, is as fatal, and as neceſſary, as if it were forced, and as little ſubject to the determination of the Principle, from whence it flowes, as it would though it proceeded from a forreigne and violent one, and by conſequence is equally incapable of morality. And ſo that principle, which is not only at liberty from Co-action, but is alſo endued with Reaſon and Underſtanding, is, without indifferency and a power of ſelf-determination, not leſſe uncapable of moral Good and Evil, then that which is quite devoid of Rational faculties, becauſe 'tis acted by an equal neceſſity. For if the Judgement and definitive ſentence of the underſtanding be natural and neceſſary (as it not only is, but is alſo unanimouſly acknowledged to be) and if the wills following this Judgement be as natural and as neceſſary as its ſelf; then 'tis as extravagant to command the will not to embrace the object commended to it by the underſtanding, as 'tis to command the underſtanding to judge otherwiſe of it then it does, which is the ſame abſurdity as to command the Eye to ſee an Object, after another manner then its

its represented to it, because they are both determined by an equal necessity. From all which it followes by all the Lawes of Inference, that if Gods goodnesse should take away the Indifferency of his will, it would certainly destroy not only his Freedome, but all his moral Perfections and Accomplishments: which is my first Argument.

2. If the Divine goodnesse or Beneficence were a necessary Agent, it would not only destroy the nature of the subject, in which it resides, but also, what is more absurd, its own: for 'tis absolutely necessary to the nature of Beneficence and Goodnesse, that it proceed from a free and elective principle. No courtesie can oblige, but what is free and chosen, and the obligation of benefits is only then acknowledg'd, when they are received from one, that had a power not to bestow them, for otherwise they are owing not to his favour and good-will, but to chance or necessity. We make no returns of gratitude to the Sun for his kind visits, and benigne Influences, because his emanations flow from a bare necessity of Nature: And *Joshuah* thank'd him not for standing still at his request and interest: I should think it a strange Solecisme in Courtship, if any one should make me retributions for a favour, that proceeded only from some necessity

neceſſity of nature and not from choiſe of will. Becauſe the reaſon of the obligingneſſe of benefits is, that they argue Benevolence and good Intentions in the donor towards the perſon, on whom he beſtowes them, but when they are the Iſſues of a neceſſary and unelective cauſe, they flow not from Good-will, and argue no benevolence in their Principle, but are the pure Reſults of Nature. And therefore if all the Communications of Gods goodneſſe be neceſſary, they may argue the fulneſſe of his nature, but cannot the goodneſſe of his will, becauſe that is founded upon choice and freedome. I have in my former reaſon endeavoured to evince that a neceſſity of acting, of what ſort ſoever, is not capable of moral Good or Evil, becauſe 'tis inconſiſtent with a Dominion over ones own actions, in which all morality is founded, for an Agent that has no power and command over its own Actions, and that acts becauſe it muſt, whatſoever excellent and commendable effects it may produce, is as uncapable of morality as thoſe ſenſeleſſe Machins, that move by the Lawes of matter and motion, becauſe it produces its effects after the ſame manner as mechanicall cauſes do, namely, by a neceſſity of nature. And if any artificiall *Automata* were endued with deliberative, elective and ſelfe moving Principles, ſo as to have power

over their own motions, they would in degrees of proportion be capable of doing well or ill, but becauſe they have no elective and ſelf-moving power, that's the Reaſon why their motions are uncapable of being good or evil; and conſequently all cauſes, whoſe effects reſult from the ſame neceſſity of Nature, and that have no power, to reſtrain their emanations, are as uncapable of morality as theſe liveleſſe Engines, in that they lye under the ſame incapacity. Now then Beneficence being a moral Excellency, it muſt looſe its morality, and conſequently its nature, when 'tis natural and neceſſary, and therefore if all the emanations of the Divine Bounty be ſuch, it will unavoidably follow, that there is no ſuch vertue as Beneficence and Goodneſſe in God, ſo that we may ſafely conclude that though the Communications of Gods Goodneſſe to his Creatures be exceedingly agreeable to his Nature, yet to make them neceſſary and naturall Reſults, is by denying their being free, to deny their being Good.

3. God can never act contrary to his neceſſary and eſſential properties, as becauſe he is eſsentially *wiſe*, *juſt* and *holy*, he can do nothing that is fooliſh, unjuſt and wicked. And therefore if Gods Beneficence and Bounty were ſo natural, as that all its exertions were neceſsary he could never act otherwiſe, but that he frequently

quently does, as is evident in all the Inſtances of his Anger and Severity, which not onely Reaſon but Scripture oppoſes to Benignity, *Rom.* 11.22. *Behold therefore the Goodneſſe and Severity of God, on them which fell ſeverity, but towards thee Goodneſſe.* And *Rom.* 9. 13. *Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I hated:* the reaſon whereof is, *v.* 15. *Becauſe I will have mercy, on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compaſſion, on whom I will have compaſſion.* The ſole cauſe then why God ſhewed greater bounty to *Jacob* then to *Eſau*, was a free determination of his own Will, without the intervention of any extrinſick Motive to incline it: For *v.* 11. *the children were yet unborn, & had done neither good nor evil, that the purpoſe of God according to Election* [or choice] *might ſtand.* The argument ſuggeſted by the Apoſtles Diſcourſe, beſide his expreſſe reſolving God's Beneficence into his free will, is this, that if the flowings forth of Gods Goodneſſe were neceſſary, then *Eſau* muſt have been bleſt with as great expreſſions of favour as *Jacob*, becauſe there could be no cauſe, that could make a difference: Not God's goodneſſe, for its exertions being neceſſary, it would ſtream forth equally into equal Capacities, and therefore if they were equally capable, the emanations of the Divine Goodneſſe muſt have been equal, ſo that there was nothing could

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put a difference, unleſſe the Perſons themſelves, but the difference was made before they could make it, *viz.* before they were born, or had done any good or evil, but were in all reſpects equal. The Spirit of God has recorded in Scripture almoſt as many inſtances of his ſeverity, as of his clemency, becauſe the exerciſe of theſe contrary vertues depends on his free will, which being indifferent to either, ſometimes diſplays the one, and ſometimes the other; whereas thoſe Attributes that are Phyſical and Neceſſary, are determin'd one way antecedently to the Determinations of his Will.

From all which premiſes, we ſee (1) that God's benignity, goodneſſe, and beneficence, conſiſt in a gracious Propenſity to let forth the Communications of his Fulneſſe to his Creatures, which being lodged in the Divine will, does not onely ſuppoſe its freedom, but is alſo ſubject to its determinations, ſo that though it may incline, yet it cannot either command or deſtroy its liberty, becauſe if it ſhould, it would not onely intefere with Gods moral accompliſhments, but would withall be inconſiſtent with it ſelf. And therefore it rather approaches to the *nature of a habit* ſeated in the Divine will, then to the condition of an *Eſſential faculty*, whence a habit and cuſtome of goodneſſe and clemency are frequently attributed

tributed to God in Scripture, but onely acts and ſingle inſtances of ſeverity; for though contrary habits cannot lodge together in the ſame faculty, yet ſingle actions of the one may ſometimes iſſue from that Power, in which its contrary is entertained: and therefore though the expreſſions of God's bounty be his uſual and conſtant work, yet he ſometimes lets forth the eruptions of anger and ſeverity, though with ſome unwillingneſſe and reluctancy: for (*Lament.* 3. 33.) *He does not willingly* (or from his heart) *afflict the children of men*; and therefore the holy Ghoſt (*Eſay.* 28. 21.) ſtiles it his *ſtrange work*, as if by reaſon of its ſeldome exerciſe, he were unacquainted with it: ſo that though Gods inclinations to acts of Beneficence and Goodneſſe be vaſtly great and vigorous, yet they are free, and depending upon the determinations of his will, and are upon this ſcore conſiſtent with his dealing ſometime with us by more ſevere and rigorous meaſures, which God is pleaſed at certain ſeaſons to diſpence according to the unſearchable Counſels of his own will. (2.) That the Communications of God's goodneſſe conſiſt in the uſe and exerciſe of his Dominion, for the good and benefit of his Creatures; for they being all originally nothing, all the advantages they enjoy to render their condition more deſireable then Non-exiſtence, are the free gifts and

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effects of Divine Goodneſſe, which being free and unconſtrained, has diſtributed its favours with an infinite variety, having made innumerable kinds of Beings, and endued them all with perceptive faculties and capacities proportion'd to their reſpective natures, and provided ſuitable objects in order to their gratification, ſo that although he has, according to the free pleaſure of his own will, created ſome in a more imperfect ſtate then others, yet he has provided liberally for the happineſs of them all, having furniſhed each order with objects agreeable to their reſpective faculties, in the perception and enjoyment of which conſiſts all pleaſure and ſatisfaction.

Now, if we will meaſure how large and ample the communications of Divine goodneſſe are, they are as vaſt as free, *Pſal.* 145. 9. *The Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Workes.* Pſal. 36. 5, 6. *Thy goodneſſe (O Lord) reacheth to the Heavens, and thy faithfulneſs to the clouds. Thy Righteouſneſs is like the great Mountains; thy Judgments* (or works of Providence) *are a great deep; thou preſerveſt man and beaſt*, &c. *i. e.* Gods goodneſſe is of equal extent with his works, as vaſt and wide as the Univerſe, running through all parts of the Creation. But to ſpeak only of that goodneſſe which concerns our ſelves: how free and unſtreitned have been the expreſſi-

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ons of his bounty to mankind? Not to mention the pleaſures and enjoyments of life it ſelf, in which the Divine munificence has made proviſion, not onely for our neceſſity, but for our delight and curioſity too; nor the great variety of perceptive faculties he has endued us with, nor the innumerable inſtancies of his Mercy, Clemency, Patience, Long-ſuffering towards the ſons of men, his ſlowneſſe and unwillingneſſe to puniſh, and his readineſſe to pardon our Impieties; nor his demanding onely ſuch homage and ſervice from us, as cannot be more our duty, then tis our happineſſe, with infinite more ineſtimable vouchſafements, and expreſſions of his tenderneſſe and good inclinations towards mankind. I will onely inſtance in his rewarding that obedience that is as unable to merit his favour, as tis to requite it, with ſuch great & uneſtimable bleſſings, *viz.* not only earthly & ſecular, but ſpiritual and eternal pleaſures: He might have ſent us into the world to act our parts a while, & have endear'd our duty to us only by its own appendant delights, & then have remanded us back into our pre-exiſtent ſtate of not being: But that he ſhould recompence the bare diſcharge of our duties, with the rewards of Heaven and Eternity, is ſuch a ſtupendious height of goodneſſe, as not only puzzles conceit, but outreaches wonder and admiration. And

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yet that which enhances the value of the Reward, is no more its greatneſſe then its freeneſſe, though ſome are ſo ignorant as to challenge a natural and neceſſary right in it: Arrogant, I ſay, becauſe if it were our due, we muſt derive it not from God's goodneſſe, but from our own deſert, for nothing beſide Gods goodneſſe can create us a right to future happineſſe, but our own Merits, which from a Creature to its Maker implies the greateſt contradiction. And if in any reſpect Heaven be our due, God would be obliged by the natural meaſures of Equity to beſtow it, and ſo our happineſſe would not derive from the free grant of Divine goodneſſe, but from the prime and intrinſick Laws of Juſtice. For if there were any natural and eternal neceſſity that happineſſe ſhould waite on Vertue, that the Vertuous are happy, would be no thanks to the Divine favour, becauſe that cannot be an act of favour, which is demanded by Juſtice and natural Right. And therefore thoſe paſſages in Scripture, that ſeem to make our future reward juſt and due, ſpeak upon ſuppoſition of God's gracious Promiſe and Covenant with mankind, as *Heb.*6. 10. *For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have ſhewed towards his Name*, 2 Tim. 4.8. *Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſſe, which the Lord, the righteous Judge,*

Judge, ſhall give me at that day; and not unto me onely, but unto all them alſo that love his appearing. In which, and other paſſages, the aſſured hope of our future reward is therefore argued from God's Juſtice, becauſe tis eſſentially juſt that he ſhould perform his Promiſes, and therefore, although God's Promiſe or Covenant were not an act of Juſtice, but of Grace, (for tis impoſſible for God to enter into any Covenant with his Creatures, but a Covenant of Grace) yet its performance, when made, is abſolutely juſt and neceſſary, and that in which God cannot faile without groſſe deceit and falſeneſſe, he having engaged his Veracity to diſcharge all the debts of his Grace. And therefore (as ſome Learned Men have noted) this Juſtice in Scripture is promiſcuouſly expreſſed by Juſtice, Truth, and Faithfulneſſe, *Rom.* 3. 3, 4, 5. they are all uſed to expreſſe the ſame thing; And 1 *Joh:* 1. 9. *If we confeſſe our ſins, he is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins;* Becauſe if he be juſt and faithful, he will perform his Promiſe.

If I were to prove the neceſſity of future Rewards and Puniſhment, from the nature of any of the Divine Attributes, I ſhall rather fetch my Arguments from the Attributes of Wiſdom then any elſe, becauſe they are (as might eaſily be evinced) ſo hugely uſeful, and well nigh neceſſary to the Government of the World;

World; whence the *Rabbins* reckon *Paradice* and *Hell* among those *seven Pillars*, upon which they say God founded the world, supposing it could not subsist without them: But yet no one sort of means being absolutely necessary to Almighty Power and Wisdom, in order to any end, God could have found out infinite wayes to engage us to obedience, though he had never acquainted us with future Rewards and Punishments. So that whatsoever Rationalities may be drawn from the Divine Attributes, to prove a future state, yet it depending wholly on the Divine will, and the Divine will being absolutely free, we can have no rational inducements to bring us to any sufficient knowledge of it, but by a clear Revelation of the Divine will, and therefore God (to compleat all the Instances of his Goodnesse) sent the blessed Jesus into the world to bring life and immortality to light, and to encourage us to Vertue and Goodnesse by greater Rewards then were before proposed to mankind. So that though we could enhance the expressions of God's love and bounty to mankind, to their utmost pitch and value, yet we have just reason to conclude, that the peculiar and unequall'd eminency of the Divine benignity, consists not so much in the greatnesse, as in the freenesse of its Emanations, as streaming forth from a fountain of free and self-moving Goodnesse.

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Of the Preexiſtence of Souls.

THough the foregoing Diſcourſes are as uſeful and important Theories as any in Divinity, (there being not any other Articles ſo univerſally intereſted in Theological Speculations as theſe; nor any thing that has occaſioned ſo much Errour and Ignorance in other points, as falſe and confuſed conceits, concerning theſe two grand Attributes of Dominion and Goodneſſe:) yet they cannot be more important and concerning in themſelves, then they will be uſefull and neceſſary for the ſucceſsfull mannagement of this enſuing diſcourſe againſt Preexiſtence; becauſe the moſt plauſible Argument alleadged, on behalf of this Hypotheſis, is grounded upon ſuch miſtaken notions of the Divine goodneſſe, as I have already (I think) evidently enough diſproved in what I have diſcourſed concerning that Attribute; ſo that I am ſo farre before hand in the Diſpute, as to have prevented the ſtrongeſt Objection I am liable to be Aſſaulted with. This premiſed, I immediately proceed (1) to give an account of the Hypotheſis it ſelf, and the grounds on which it bottoms; and then (2) to give in my exceptions both againſt it and them. And that you may be ſure of my faithfulneſſe in the firſt, I will perform

form it as near as I can, in the very words of its moſt peremptory Aſſertours. Their account then is this,

That the Souls of men are not then firſt produced, when they are united to the Bodies prepared for them by generation, but were created all at firſt in an incomparably more Bleſſed and Divine Condition of Life, then that they are now condemned to in this ſad Region of ſin and miſery, but that at ſeveral times and occaſions by their Revolt from God and his righteous Lawes they forfeited their better life and condition, and ſo were thruſt down into theſe terreſtrial Bodies, partly to be puniſhed for their former prevarications, and partly that by acting their parts well here, they might recover that more happy ſtate from which they lapſed into this. And this they endeavour to prove,

1. From the nature of Divine Goodneſs, which (ſay they) is conſtrained alwaies to do what is beſt; for the Souls of men being capable of eternal exiſtence and happineſſe backward as well as forward, and it being much better that they ſhould have enjoyed the pleaſure of their life and actions from eternal Ages, then either to have layn ſo long in the comfortleſſe night of nothing, or to have been at firſt created in ſo mean and wretched a condition, as that is which they ſuffer in this Regi-

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on of Death and Miſery; and then God being infinitely good and gracious, and infinite Goodneſſe doing by the ſame neceſſity that which is beſt, as infinite fire will neceſſarily burn whatever is combuſtible if put to it, it clearly and unavoidably follows (ſay they) that they muſt have exiſted of old before they came into theſe Bodies.

2. From the Actions of Providence, which will no otherwiſe correſpond to thoſe holy Attributes in the Deity, Righteouſneſſe and Benignity, according to which he Governs and Orders the affaires of all the World. And this Argument they make uſe of two waies, *viz.* in reſpect of the place and time wherein we are born, and of the temper and diſpoſition of the body, wherewith we are born.

As to the firſt of theſe, there is no man doubts but that education, inſtitution, and company, are of ſuch wonderful moment to the making us good or bad, as that where vice and wickedneſſe are in uſe and practiſe, there ſeems little leſſe then a neceſſity of ſwimming down in the ſtream of our Countrys Vices: And then the greateſt part of the World having been alwayes over-run with all manner of Luſt and Barbarity, for God to ſend out of his pure and holy hands an immaculate Soul, capable of living elſewhere, and fit for all

vertue and heavenly Wisdome, into an habitation in such parts of the Earth, where reignes nothing but grosse Ignorance and Vice, by which she cannot fail without a miracle to be overborn, what is this, say they, but to betray his own off-spring unto unavoidable miseries?

As to the second of these they argue thus, seeing there are in mankind strange and fatal propensities to all manner of vice and wickedness, that flow from the very intrinsick constitution of their Bodies, how can it be consistent with the Goodness and Righteousness of God, the blessed spring of all vertue and Holiness, and tender lover of all his Creatures, to put innocent souls into such foul and untamed bodies, which so fatally and necessarily hurry them to that which alone of all things in the World he disapproves of, and which he knows will be their utter bane and miserable ruin.

And here some of them argue more particularly from the absurdity of the two opinions of the souls immediate creation, or seminal traduction; for if it begins neither of these waies, it must have preexisted, therefore (1) against the first of them, they use the forementioned Argument, *viz.* that it seems inconsistent with the Goodnesse and Benignity of God, to put pure and immaculate spirits into such Bodies as will presently defile them, pervert all their powers and faculties, and incline

cline them to all manner of vice and impiety. And then (2) against the second, *viz.* seminal Propagation of souls, they argue from the nature of the soul it self, for (say they) if the soul be generated, then it must be made of the soul of the Parent, which is against the nature of an immaterial Being, the chief propertie of which is to be indiscerpable. These are the most material considerations urged in behalf of Preexistence, others that either depend on these, or are lesse considerable, I shall have occasion to mention as I proceed, and withall, to replie to a few passages of Scripture, that for the better countenance of the businesse, they presse to serve in the cause of this Controversie. Having given you this brief, but comprehensive account of the Hypothesis it self, I now proceed to give in my Exceptions.

First then, although I am not oblig'd by vertue of what I have discoursed in my fifth exception against the *Platonick Philosophy*, to oppose this Hypothesis by Counterarguings, because tis out of the sphere of Humane knowledge, and to be ranked among *Epicurus's* τὰ δυνατὰ ἢ τὰ ἐνδεχόμενα; *things meerly possible, and meerly contingent*; and so is sufficiently confuted by destroying the grounds on which it stands, yet, to render my Triumph over it more full and entire, I shall make

my first onset from an objection drawn from its ill corresponding with the divine Attributes of Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness, and that upon a twofold account.

1. In that it supposes God to inflict the severities of his Justice without attaining the ends thereof; for to what purpose is it to inflict penalties upon any person for offences, of which he is as ignorant, as he could have been, though they had never been committed? For assign they what ends of Justice they please, this is most undenyably certain, that to punish a guilty person, that is invincibly ignorant of his sins, is as far from attaining the ends of Justice, as to inflict the same Punishments upon one that's guiltless, for if he has no knowledge of his miscarriages, he has the same reason to be faultless in his own esteem as he that is really so: But for God to chastise with the rods of his vengeance any Creature that is in the same condition with the Innocent and guiltless (in reference to the ends of Justice and Punishment) bids not a lesse defiance to the Reputation of his Attributes, then to inflict the same Punishments upon one that never deserved it. I conclude therefore, that if the calamities of this life were inflicted upon us only as punishments of Sins committed in an other, Providence would have provided some effectual means

means to preſerve them in our memories; and therefore becauſe we find no remainders of any ſuch Records in our minds, tis (I think) ſufficient evidence to all ſober and impartial enquirers, that our living and ſinning in a former ſtate is as falſe as inevident.

2. In that it would be an invincible Temptation to mankind to have hard and jealous thoughts of Gods dealings with them. For when they ſee themſelves environed with miſeries and puniſhments; and feel the heavy ſtrokes of Divine Anger, and yet are utterly ignorant that they have offended him, what mor juſt and reaſonable grounds can they have not only to call in queſtion but flatly to denie his Goodneſſe and Equity. For if it will not comport with God's Righteouſneſſe and Benignity to place us in theſe ſad Circumſtances we are in, unleſſe thereby to puniſh us for our former prevarications (as the patrons of Preexiſtence fiercely and clamorouſly conteſt) when we know our ſelves to be in this ſad plite, and yet are utterly deſtitute of all knowledge how we deſerved it, what can we more naturally infer, then that God has, contrary to all the Lawes of Juſtice and Equity, made us Wretched and Miſerable? Should he take the moſt lewd and debauched Villain upon Earth, & thruſt him into the Dungeons of endleſſe miſery, but withall take

away all sence and memory of his former state and wickedness, would not that miserable wretch have just reason to exclaime against the Cruelty of his Maker, as supposing himself created in that sad and deplorable state? And suppose it possible for God to have produced any Being in the same miserable condition the damned in Hell are supposed to suffer, that wretched Creature might as well argue for a state of Preexistence, in which it had deserved the Torments it endures, as any other Being, that finds it self in that forlorn condition, but is deprived of all knowledge of any former scene of Life? Now God cannot in reason expect we should acknowledge his Justice and Righteousness contrary to his actings, and therefore if he has inflicted upon us those Calamities, that cannot justly be inflicted upon any but sinners, and yet not let us know we are such, what else can we conclude but that we innocents are unjustly doom'd to the sad and miserable Portion of the Wicked.

Perhaps it would not be difficult to invent many other not inconsiderable Objections, but these are all that occurre to my thoughts at present, and all those I have met with in Authors are most lamentably frivolous and impertinent. And therefore I shall immediately passe on to the main and onely needful part of my Task, *viz.* to evince the groundlessness

neſſe of this Hypotheſis I oppoſe, for if I can ſhew the Ratiocinations from whence they conclude its Truth and Reality to be apparently vaine and frivolous, I ſhall thereby ſufficiently evidence the vanity of the Hypotheſis it ſelf, as being built upon vain and trifling Pretences. But before I deſcend to their particular Examination, it will not be impertinent to obſerve,

1. That it would be no difficult task to erect other much different or quite contrary Hypotheſes. Me thinks that purely Phyſical account which *Porphiry* ſome where gives of the Souls deſcent into theſe Terreſtrial Bodies, is as neat and handſome as the Origenian or Moral one, for as this derives our lapſe Originally from our voluntary and choſen Immoralities, that other derives them meerly from a Phyſical neceſſity, which it illuſtrates by this ſimilitude. As a fruitfull field, though it may for a certain period of years yield good Grain, yet at length it is exhauſted and grows barren, and then if it be laid fallow though it brings forth nothing but weeds and tares, yet it thereby recovers its ancient vigour and fruitfulneſſe; ſo our Souls having been for many ages impregnated with the ſeed of Divine Ideas, by degrees ſpent themſelves in bringing forth large returns of contemplation, till at length their Intellectuall powers

powers decaying, the higher part falls into a swoon, and they can exert no acts but of Imagination, whence spring forth the powers of the Vegetal life, which cause in them strong and irresistible propensities to an union with these inferiour and terrestrial Bodies, in order to the awaking of the higher Powers; for because every thing in the Etherial Regions is too calme and serene to awake them, they are therefore conveyed into this place of noises and disturbance, and invessel'd in a body full of rude and impetuous passions, by which they may be chafed into life and sensation again. Or what if I would, out of a perverse humour of contradiction, assigne a quite contrary Hypothesis of Preexistence, and as they will have this world a place of Punishment, and maintain the Soul came into it by lapsing from a happier and more excellent condition, so why may not I assert that 'tis a place of Reward, and that God sends us hither to reward our vertuous actions in a lower and lesse happy condition of life, or that they that had miscarried in a weaker and lesse advantageous state, might once more try their fortunes in better and more advantageous circumstances? Which Hypothesis would be as much, and perhaps more consistent with it self, then the contrary. For seeing they will needs have it the design of Providence, in thrusting the Soul down into this

Region

Region of Misery, to amend and reforme, as well as chastise it, it seems much more consonant to effect this, by raising it to a more perfect state, then dooming it to a worse, for 'tis a very preposterous way to Reformation, to put the soul into such fatal propensities of sinning, (as they say 'tis in here;) this being the directest course utterly and irrecoverably to undo it. And now had I a mind to set up for a Maker of Hypotheses, (which you see is but an easie trade) I might so trim and adorn this with artificial and affected Phrases, and so support it with a set of Theorems, Pillars, and Fundamental Principles, as to make it appear a competently handsome and well built Structure. And withal, I think it would be able to stand the shock of those Objections and Counter-evidences, that would shrewdly shake, if not utterly demolish the Origenian Hypothesis: But if any Origenist shall disapprove my Hypothesis, I only challenge him to confute it, for I am sure the like arguments will confute his own: and therefore to shew him the Vanity of inventing groundlesse and imaginary Hypotheses, I will be so crosse-grain'd as not to abandon mine, as long as he shall persist peremptory in his.

2. The second thing I am to observe, is, that they (which is the usual oversight of unwary disputants) dispute not more against their Adversaries

Adversaries then themselves, in that the Arguments they use to destroy all other Hypotheses and confirm their own, do as evidently oppose it as them. For their own account of our descent into this world is, that 'tis onely a merciful provision and contrivance of the infinite Wisdome and Goodnesse of God (the end of all whose Councils is his Creatures Happinesse) *to put lost and delinquent Souls into a capacity of acting their parts anew, that so, so many of his excellent creatures, might not be lost and undone irrecoverably, but that they might be in a condition to recover the old happinesse of their Celestiall state.* Now is it not highly derogatory to the infinite and unbounded Wisdome of God, *that he* should detrude those souls, which he so seriously designs to make happy, into a state so hazardous, *wherein he seeth it to be ten thousand to one, but that they will corrupt and defile themselves, and so make themselves more miserable here, and to Eternity hereafter?* A strange method of Recovery this, to put them into such a fatal necessitie of perishing. 'Tis but an odde contrivance for their Restauration to happinesse, to use such means to compasse it, which 'tis ten thousand to one but will make them infinitely more miserable. This is such a contrivance of Mercy, that puts us in a worse condition, then it abandons the Devils to, for

Lux. Orient. p. 42.

if

if the conditions of our Recovery be ſo near being impoſſible, our ſtate is as bad as theirs, and if the non-performance of theſe conditions be puniſht with greater penalties, 'tis worſe. Better be abandon'd to an eternal deſpaire, then have hopes to be reſcued onely by ſuch means, as 'tis *ten thouſand to one* but will exceedingly encreaſe our Torment and Miſery. Again, *If we call to mind the ſad accounts we have met withall in Hiſtory, of times and places almoſt all the world over, over-run with all manner of barbarity and luſt, adopted even into their Lawes, and practiſed in their moſt ſolemn Religions, how can we but think that the Soul then and there born and living, is inevitably condemned to all Iniquity and Impiety?* But can we imagine that infinite Wiſdome ſeriouſly purpoſes to reſtore us to our ancient Holineſſe and Purity, when it places us in ſuch a ſtate, in which we are inevitably condemned to all Iniquity and Impiety? If God had contrived to betray us into all manner of vice and wickedneſſe, how could he more effectually have accompliſh't it, then by putting us into ſuch a condition, as ſhould inevitably condemne us to all Iniquity and Impiety? That Father would take a ſtrange courſe to reforme a debauch'd and wretchleſſe Child, that ſhould goe about to effect it by abandoning him to the Society

The account of Orig. &c. pag. 27.

of

of Rogues and Villains. Pap. 28. *For God therefore to send an immortal Soul* (whose happinesse is his greatest design and contrivance) *into an habitation in such parts of the Earth, where reigns nothing but grosse ignorance and vice, by which she cannot fail without a miracle to be over-born, what is this but to betray his own off-spring* (*for he is the Father of Spirits*) *unto unavoidable misery*, whilest he pretends to plot and contrive their happinesse, *and so govern the world with lesse prudence, then an ordinary discreet man would do.* Once more in their own words, Pag. 35. *I would aske them whether or no the condition of our nature considered, the strong inclinations naturally to that which is evil, and those strengthned and further confirmed for several years before we can come to have any considerable use of our Reason, or arrive to any command over our selves. Lastly, the way and manner how the Elections of our will are performed, which we never find free, where there is a custome or passion against it, and how corporeal motions determine the thoughts and passions of our minds; I ask them whether these things being considered, it be not hundreds to one oddes, that we shall choose the ways of Vice rather then Vertue? Or let the proportion be as little as they can with any colour pretend, they cannot clear the Wisdome and Discretion of Divine Providence by their Hypothesis*

theſis, which thruſts the Spirits (it intends to make for ever happy) *into ſo great a danger of being defiled and corrupted by the paſſions of the Body, and of ſoundly ſmarting for it hereafter.* Thus you ſee what ſtrong Objections, the Arguments they urge with moſt noiſe and clamour, are againſt themſelves, if therefore theſe Phænomena be inexplicable without the Origenian Hypotheſis, they are ſo too with it; and if ſo, then the reſult of all is, that they are not ſo much Arguments of Preexiſtence, as Aſperſions of Providence. For whatever Hypotheſis is true, they charge Gods Tranſactions with mankind either of Injuſtice or Folly; and therefore I ſhall attempt their ſolution not ſo much to oppoſe the Hypotheſis of Preexiſtence, as to vindicate the Divine Providence from ſo many contumelious and unworthy Reproaches. After theſe more general conſiderations againſt the Hypotheſis it ſelf: I come now to a particular Examination of the Arguments on which 'tis founded.

Firſt then, as for that ſtrong Demonſtration (as they ſtile it) taken from the Nature of Gods goodneſſe, which they ſuppoſe conſtrain'd to do alwayes that which is beſt, 'tis ſo fully, not only anſwered, but confuted, in what I have already diſcourſed, of the nature and extent of Gods Goodneſs and Dominion,

that

that to subjoyn any formal Reply, would be but a needlesse and troublesome Repetition. For having made it apparently evident, that any state, better then that of Non-existence, may be the object of Gods Dominion, and the effect of his Goodnesse; every condition of Being preferable to that of Not-being, is not only consistent with the Divine Goodnesse, but a Product of it; and therefore if they will make good this Argument drawn from the Divine Goodnesse for their Hypothesis, they must first either disprove the Truth and Validity of my preceding discourses, or else make it appear that the condition of Souls in this life is more deplorable and less desirable, then the state of Annihilation. And when they shall have done either, they will deserve a farther reply, but not till then.

And yet I cannot forbear to super-adde this one Consideration more, *viz.* that the boundlesse Infinity of the Divine Goodnesse is consistent with the existence of different Ranks and Orders of Creatures, God being not constreined to make every Creature the most Perfect he can, for then there would have been but one sort of Beings, *viz.* the highest and most consummate Rank of all, whereas we see the World repleniſh'd with divers species of Creatures, some more, some lesse perfect.

Now,

Now, if notwithstanding the Infiniteneſſe of the Divine Goodneſſe, there may be various kinds of Creatures of various and unequal Perfections; then what neceſſity or Reaſon imaginable is there, the Divine Goodneſſe ſhould be conſtrain'd to let forth its largeſt Emanations to mankind; for why may not our ſpecies be of an inferiour Rank in the order of Beings? And if ſo, then what neceſſity is there we ſhould be endued with all poſſible Perfections? Are there not ſeveral Ranks of Spirits or Immaterial Beings? And are not the Aſſertors of Preexiſtence the moſt Zealous Patrons thereof? And do they not marſhal the Souls of Men in one of the loweſt and moſt imperfect Orders, as being united to the groſſeſt and moſt ignoble Body, *viz. Terreſtrial matter*, whilſt all the reſt reſide in Bodies of *Air* or *Æther*? and therefore for men to deem the Divine Goodneſſe leſſe infinite, becauſe its Communications are not ſo great to them as they are to others, is as abſurd as it was for the Figs in the Fable, that complain'd to *Jupiter*, becauſe he had not made them Grapes. Again, why might not all theſe ſeveral Ranks of immaterial Beings be at firſt created in the ſame eſtate they are in at preſent, without lapſing from a higher to a lower condition of life, as well as ſeveral ſorts of material Creatures, which were at firſt diſ-

posed in the same order they still hold? If God could, his Goodnesse notwithstanding, create such an innumerable variety of Insects, which are but imperfect and half Animals; then why might he not also, notwithstanding the same Goodnesse, create among spiritual Essences a species not more perfect then humane Souls? For if the boundlesnesse of God's Goodnesse does not hinder but that some creatures may exist in a much more imperfect condition then others, then neither can it hinder but that the Souls of men might be placed in a much lesse perfect condition then other immaterial Beings. From all which it followes, that it cannot with the least pretence of Reason, be argued from the Nature of God's Goodnesse, that the Souls of men did once preexist in the happiest state, which Beings of their Nature are possibly capable of enjoying. As for their Arguments taken from the Providence of God, their whole force Centers in this one difficulty, that God has not taken sufficient care for the happinesse of his Creatures, but has left them too obnoxious to Sin and Misery; now to assoile and clear off this Objection, I need onely evince that the Divine Providence has made not onely sufficient but large provisions for the Happinesse of Mankind. But I shall not be content nakedly to answer their Objections

ctions, unleſſe I can confute them too; In order to which, I ſhall undertake to do theſe two things, (1) To propoſe a plaine and eaſie Hypotheſis, that gives a rational and ſatisfactory account of all the forementioned Phænomena of Providence. And then (2) to ſhew that Mankind is not onely endued with ſuch Faculties, by the uſe whereof he may arrive at the higheſt degrees of Vertue and Happineſſe, but alſo that we have the greateſt Endearments and Advantages in the world, to engage and aſſiſt us in a diligent and vigorous proſecution thereof.

My Hypotheſis is this, That it has pleaſed Providence to place Mankind here in an immature and more imperfect ſtate, that ſo we might in a way congruous to free and rational Agents by degrees be fitted for, and at length arrive at a better and more raiſed condition of life. As in nature all things commence their Beings in a rude and immature ſtate, and make orderly progreſſions, to farther degrees of maturity, till they arrive at the utmoſt perfections their Beings are capable of; ſo is mankind created and born into the World as it were in the Spring, in a Budding and Bloſſoming ſeaſon, that ſo we may by proceeding forward in the differing Periods of our Lives, grow up to higher and more excellent Capacities, till at length we ripen into a

ſtate of maturity and perfection. Our natures are at firſt ſomewhat rough-caſt, to the end that they might be refined and poliſhed by Vertue and Religion; ſo that 'tis the main (and perhaps onely) deſign of Religion to perfect and advance our Natures, and make us capable of a higher and more noble condition of life. Now I need not declaim and expatiate upon the neatneſſe and conſiſtency of this Hypotheſis, it being an Oeconomy hugely agreeable to all the deſignes and purpoſes of Religion, the Natural tendency whereof is to raiſe us to higher Capacities and nearer approaches to the Divine Nature. This gives a more general reaſon of the preſent, low and imperfect condition of mankind, but that I may give a more certain and perſpicuous account thereof, and more cloſe to the main Origenian objection, (*viz.* why God ſhould put pure and immaculate Souls into theſe diſorderly Brutiſh Bodies) I ſhall make my Hypotheſis more diſtinct and particular.

Mankind then is in an order of Beings placed in a middle ſtate between Angels and Brutes, made up of contrary principles, *viz.* Matter and Spirit, endued with contrary faculties, *viz.* Animal and Rational, and incompaſs'd with contrary Objects proportion'd to their reſpective faculties, that ſo they may be in a capacity to exerciſe the Vertues proper

and

and peculiar to their compounded and heterogeneal Natures. For the perfection of humane Souls does not consist in an effeminate Beauty, and Physical proportions, but in a manly courage and moral accomplishments, as at the *Olympick Games* there was no regard had to Beauty and Neatnesse, they onely were capable of honour and reputation, who had courage and patience enough to combate. And the life of man in this world is nothing else but an Olympick exercise, God having placed us here not to admire the native Beauty and Perfection of our Beings, but to exercise our selves in the conflicts and difficulties of Vertue; therefore the worth and praise of the Soul, consists in a Braveness and Gallantry of Spirit, when it scorns to be usurp'd upon by those faculties that ought to obey her, and checks and controules all their unruly and tumultuous exorbitances by her own soveraign and imperial Lawes, and resolutely defends its own Authority and Prerogative against all the furious and rebellious attempts of Passion and Concupiscence. And therefore though humane Souls be capable of subsisting by themselves, yet God has placed them in bodies full of brutish and unreasonable Propensions, that they might be capable of exercising many choice and excellent Vertues, which otherwise could never have been

at all; such as Temperance, Sobriety, Chastity, Patience, Meeknesse, Equanimity, and all other Vertues that consist in the Empire of Reason over Passion and Appetite. Religion is common to Men and Angels, appertaining to them purely as Spirits, but Vertue is proper to Man alone, and belongs to him as a Being made up of contrary principles, whence spring contrary desires and inclinations, in the good or bad Government whereof consists the Nature of Vertue and Vice, and upon this score 'tis that Vertue is never attributed to God, because being of a simple and purely spiritual nature, he has no unruly passions and sensual Appetites to govern.

And therefore the Platonists, though they place all Intellectual vertues ἐν τῇ χωριζομένῃ ψυχῇ in the abstracted Soul, yet they will have all Moral ones reside ἐν τῷ κοινῷ in the Compositum, denying the naked Soul to be capable of moral Good or Evil, these belonging only to the whole, which results from Soul and Body; ἁμαρτάνει τὸ σύνθετον saies *Plotinus*. And this (by the way) is their meaning, when they unanimously resolve that grand perplexing enquiry πόθεν τὰ κακὰ into the *terrestrial Hyle*; because our material Principal, by reason of its intrinsique dulnesse and stupidity, naturally hinders and obstructs the intellectual efforts of the mind, and inclines it to the love of material

material and sensual objects, which if it suffer it selfe to be so far immerst into Matter, as to pursue onely or chiefly the satisfaction of its grosse and sottish Propensities, thence naturally spring all those Irregularities that passe under the name of Moral vices. And this account of the Origine of Evil, is not so devoid of Reason, as some Learned men would perswade us. For (1) it does not (as is objected) make Matter to be essentially evill, but rather the occasion thereof from its extra-essential union with the Soul. Nor (2) does it make the existence of Evil natural and necessary, for it does not assert that it results from the nature of Matter (as they would make us believe) but onely an accidental effect thereof after its union with the Soul, in that from the sluggishnesse of its nature, it inclines the Soul to the love of grosse and material objects, and if the Soule be so careless as to yield to its inclinations, it becomes the voluntary cause of its own evil. But you will think my Pen very unruly, if it be so apt to fly out into Digressions, when tis in so great a speed, and therefore I return.

Now because the nature of Vertue consists in the minds governing the Brutish and Animal appetites and motions of the Body, Providence has furnish'd it with instruments convenient for that purpose, for having its princi-

pal and commanding residence ὁ πλοκαμίτης, where the *Nerves* that convey all Motions and impressions backward and forward, have their Original, 'tis able by its immediate influence upon them to command and bridle all the Animal motions of the Body. Thus because all excess of Passion consists in an irregular motion of the blood; the Nerves (which the Soul uses as it reins) are twisted about the veins and arteries, that so by contracting them, it may be able to refrain and check the Impetuosity of the Bloods motion, and consequently curb the eager and unruly passion; as when for example such an object is presented to us, that naturally provokes to anger, which mainly consists in a violent ebullition and fervour of the blood about the Region of the Heart, which violently hurrying from thence into the Brain, disorders the motions of the Spirits there, and so by confounding the phantasmes that lodge therein, disturb all its conceptions and operations; then does it concern the Soul to abate and cool this unruly heat; which is effected by restraining the violence of the Torrent, which is effected by its influence upon those Nerves that are the passage & high way from the Brain to the Heart. And therefore the Providence of nature has made a peculiar passage for commerce between the Head and the Heart in Man

V. *Willis* Cereb. Anat. cap. 26.

Man, where is but one in Beasts, whereas the *Precordia* of Beasts are furnished with nervous branches only from the *Par vagum* to supply the vital functions with spirits; in which there are peculiar large branches, derived from the *Intercostal Nerve* into the same region, only for a way of commerce between the Brain and the Heart, and passage of the Animal spirits from the one to the other, as need shall require. So much that we may define Prudence and Vertue to be nothing else but a due commerce between the Brain and the Heart, (which *Plotinus* only expresses more abstractedly, when he describes it to be [illegible]) of which the forecited machiesse Author supplys us with a clear Example, *viz.* that dissecting a Changeling of Natural Fool, the chief defect he could discover in him was, that this *Plexus* of the *Intercostal Nerve*, which is propet to the body of Man, and is the way of commerce for the Animal spirits between the Heart and the Brain was exceeding small, and its branches very thin. By reason whereof, his Soul could have but very little command over his Passions and Appetites, in the impotency and irregularity whereof consists the nature of Folly.

The result of all is this, that mankind is compounded of contrary Principles, endued

with

with contrary desires and inclinations, to the end that there might be an order of Beings in the world (without which there would perhaps have been one Species wanting to compleat the Universe) capable of all those Heroick Vertues, which consist in the Empire of Reason over the bruitish and sensual Faculties. As also that by the right use and improvement of our superiour Powers, we might be raised to greater Capacities, and qualified for higher and more divine Accomplishments. So that man seems to differ from the Angels only in this, that he must by conquest and industry win the happinesse, which Providence has entail'd on their Natures, for when we become ἰσάγγελοι in our dispositions, we shall be made so too in our enjoyments; the Divine Goodnesse having graciously appointed, that when the Soul is so far advanced in Vertue, as to live above the reach of all its Passions and Desires, that then it shall be translated into a more free and disintangled state, where it shall be neither enticed nor vex'd with the importunity of these lower and bruitish Appetites, but shall enjoy the Serenity and Pleasures of a pure and intellectuall Being, as the Reward of its former Pains and Industry. As on the contrary, when any man suffers his Passions and Bruitish Appetites to beat Reason out of its Throne, and to run headlong

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into an ungovernable Anarchy, he degenerates from humanity, grows incorrigible in sin, and sinks so deep into the Animal life, as to be made uncapable of acting Vertuously, and suitably to the ends of his Being; and thence is congruously doom'd to the Portion of degenerate and apostate Spirits, as being fitted for nothing else. So that the whole designe of Providence, in sending us into this world, is only that we may in a way congruous to rational Agents, prepare our selves for another; and therefore the Souls of men shall at their departure hence, be stated in a condition proportion'd to their good or bad Qualifications. I am apt to be positive and dogmatical in this Hypothesis, not so much because it gives a rational and satisfactory account of Gods sending pure and innocent Souls into Bodies full of brutish and irregular Inclinations, as because it exactly agrees with the Condition of our Natures, with the natural tendency of Vertue and Religion, and with the whole Oeconomy of Providence in conducting mankind to their future happinesse. Not to mention its consonancy with Saint *Pauls* Hypothesis, in his Account of the Civil and Intestine Warre between the law of the Mind and the law of the Members.

And now having laid my Hypothesis, I come to shew (1.) that mankind is endued

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with such faculties, by the use whereof, he may attain to the highest degrees of Vertue and Happinesse, (a) that we have the greatest endearments and advantages in the world to push us forward to a diligent and vigorous Prosecution thereof. And if Vertue and Happinesse be in our own power, and if we are invited to pursue and endeavour after them by the greatest endearments and perswasions, then certainly Providence has placed us in a sufficient capacity of being happy, and if it happen that we should at last be abandoned to Misery, we must owe it to our own choice and prodigious folly.

1. First then, Mankind is furnished with such faculties, by the use whereof he may arrive at Vertue and Happinesse. To evidence this, I require no other *Postulatum*, then that which is the great foundation of all Religion and Morality, *viz.* that the Mind of man is endued with Reason and Understanding, able to discern the essential differences of Good and Evil; and with Liberty and Election, able to choose and pursue the one, and eschew the other. This (I say) is a *Postulatum* so just and evident, as that it cannot be denyed without destroying not onely the Nature of Good and Evil, but of Man himself. For if in any thing we differ from Brutes, 'tis in the Reason and Liberty of our minds;

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all our other faculties we have in common with them, 'tis these alone that are the peculiar Prerogatives of humane Nature, and therefore without them we may be Sheep or Oxen, but not Men.

——Separat hæc nos
A grege mutorum, atque ideo venerabile solis
Sortiti Ingenium, divinarumque capaces;
Atque exercendis capiendisque Artibus apti,
Sensum à cælesti demissum traximus Arce.

However these are the efficient Causes and necessary Foundations of all Morality, for no Action can be morally Good or Evil, but what we can choose, and concerning which we can deliberate, because without them all our Actions would be either Casual or Fatal, and the meer Issues of Chance or Necessity, and by consequence, as uncapable of being moral, as those motions that result purely from Mechanical Powers, as I have already (I think) demonstrated, in what I have discoursed concerning the Freedome of the Divine Goodnesse. And now, if the mind of man be a deliberative and elective Principle, able to discern between Good and Evil, Happinesse and Misery, and to choose the one and refuse the other, then 'tis at its own choice, and in its own power to be Vertuous

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and Happy; for no body questions but that Goodnesse and Happinesse are much more eligible then Vice and Misery, and therefore if men are able to discern, and choose that which is best, their Happinesse and misery depend upon their own wills; and their Portion, whether good or bad, is the result of their own choice, and certainly they that can be vertuous and happy if they will, are in a fair capacity of being so.

From hence it followes, that the mind and rational part of man is Superior and Predominant, not only endued with Power, but also invested with Authority to Govern the inferiour and brutish part, which is of a slavish and servile nature, and made to obey. Reason is uppermost, and has the bridle in its own hands, and is strong enough to manage the wildest and most untractable Passions. There's no appetite within us uncontroulable, no inclinations so strong and fatal, which reason cannot master; natural Propensities can only tempt, but not command our Souls; they may encline, but cannot force them; and our minds are never vanquished, but when they betray themselves. Briefly, none of the charms of Concupiscence are so powerful and irresistible, but that Wisdome and Discretion can easily dissolve and disenchant them. The Truth and Reality whereof, I thus Argue, Either

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the rational Part of man is able to command the lower Appetites, or 'tis not; if it is, then is he sufficiently able to live well and happily; because Vertue and Happinesse are obtain'd by living up to Reason, and being conducted by its Lawes and measures; and therefore if our superiour Powers are able to give check and controule to our brutish Lusts and Passions, 'tis in our own Power to attain to vertue and happinesse. But if the Superior part be not strong enough to Govern the Inferiour, it destroys the very Being and Existence of Good and Evil, and renders mankind utterly uncapable of Goodnesse and Morality. For (1) our Irrational faculties are unanimously acknowledged to be uncapable of Moral goodnesse, because they are acted purely by a necessity of Nature; and their Exertions, like the Appetites of Brutes, and the Motions of Artificial Engines, result meerly from the Mechanical Powers of Matter. And hence 'tis that our *Imperate actions* (*i. e.* those that do not issue immediately from the Will it self, but are exerted at its command, by some of the inferiour faculties that owe it subjection) are devoid of all moral Capacities, as considered abstractedly in themselves, or as proceeding from their immediate Cause, and without respect to the wills Authority, because when so considered, they are not free and voluntary,

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and therefore their being Morally good or evil is entirely derived from the Will, because they act only in obedience to its Commands. Nor (2.) would our Rational faculties in this case, be capable of Morality, as being fatally determined by the stronger and irresistible motions of Lust and Passion. But the Actions that proceed merely from force and forreign Violence, are of all others least capable of being moral, because they do not only not issue from a free and self-determining Principle, which is the greatest and most necessary foundation of all Morality, but also because they are not at all determined from their own Principle, but are forced thence barely by the Power of an exteriour Agent. Besides this, the moral Goodness our Superior faculties are capable of, would consist in their Commanding and Governing the Inferiour, but if they are not able to master and rule them, they cannot be supposed to be enjoyn'd to govern them, because nothing can be obliged to impossibilities; and therefore if our Superior Powers are commanded to govern the Inferior, they must have strength enough to do it. Wherefore, howsoever fatal and boisterous our Brutish propensions are, if there be any such thing as Religion and Moral goodness in the World, they must be subject to the command and discipline of our Superior and

Governing

Governing faculties. From all which 'tis evident, by a plain and undeniable deduction, that mankind, notwithstanding the force of their brutish Inclinations, is placed in a fair capacity of living well and happily, which utterly destroys all the forementioned Arguments alleadged from this Phænomenon of Providence, on the behalf of Preexistence.

As for the other part of their Argument, taken from the customary Vices and Impieties of the World, *viz.* seeing that Custome and Education have a great influence upon the manners of men, to make them good or bad, as also that the greatest part of the world has been alwayes over-run with all manner of lust and barbarity; for God to send an Immaculate Soul into an habitation into such parts of the Earth, where reigns nothing but Vice and Wickedness, by which she cannot fail without a Miracle to be over-born, is to betray his own off-spring unto unavoidable Misery. 'Tis an objection sets too mean a value upon humane Nature, and supposes mankind no better then Mushrooms, as if all men were but so many Engines moved by the wheels of Custome, and had not faculties within them able to discerne of the good and evill of Customes, as well as of other things. I confesse custome has acquired great Power

and Authority over the life of Man; because the lives of most men are disposed of by chance and casual Principles, they pursue those things with which custome presents their Fancies, without ever deliberating of their Goodnesse and Decency. You know who has Pictured mankind coming into the World upon Hobby-horses; and truly (Sir) the Emblem would perhaps have been as true, if he had represented most of them going out so. *Seneca* long since complain'd, that the World was not govern'd so much by Reason, as by Custome; Men accounting that most Honest, which is most in Practise; and Error when it becomes Publick, becomes Truth. Custome is almost every where so confident, as to out-face Reason, and charge it of singularity, as indeed the Wisest men are the greatest Rebels to her Usurped Empire, whilst she rides upon the shoulders of the People, who are almost universally, not only her Slaves, but her Idolaters: For the rude and vulgar sort of people, every where, judge of things barely by their conformity to the Modes and Fashions of their own Country, and esteem all forreign Customes and usages inept and barbarous, purely for their disagreement with their own Domestick manners; and therefore I account the Boors of *Attica*, and the common people of *Greece* (in its most refined

refined age) not lesse barbarous then the wild and unpolish'd *Scythian*, because they were equally Idiotical, and lived by no other Rule then Prescription, preferring the Customes of *Greece*, as the Standard of Decency, and judging of the goodnesse of things by their Correspondence with the Manners and Fashions of their own Country, and condemning all strange and forreign usages of barbarity, because they agreed not with the Municipal lawes and customes of the Town they lived in. But the plain and evident Reason of all this is, because the Idioticall sort of Mankind are Fools, and live below the dignity of their Natures. For certainly Reason ought to take the upper hand of prescription, and men that are *wise* and *considerate* (*i.e.* those that live as becomes men) will examine the nature and reasonablenesse of customes, and not relie upon their Warrantie till they are satisfied of their Goodnesse, and adopt only those which they judge to be innocent and laudable. Opinion is the guide of Fooles, and to yield ones self up to the Government of Custome is one of the grossest instances of Folly; and 'tis but a silly Apologie for fond or vicious Practices, to plead that 'tis the Custome of the World: For no man can tamely resigne up the Authority of his Judgement to the power of this little Monosyllable Tyrant (as *Erasmus*

according to the quibling wit of his age terms *Mos*) unleſſe he renounce his allegiance to his Reaſon, and live the life of *brutes* that alwaies follow one another for company. And therefore if Cuſtome be the Empreſs of the world, 'tis becauſe men delight in ſlavery, and abandon their Liberty to live in Chains, for if they would continue faithful to their own Faculties, and own no other guide but their Reaſons, (which doubtleſsly is the prime and fundamental duty of mankind) they would ſcorn to ſuffer themſelves to be oppreſſed and impoſed upon by ſo ſilly a thing as Cuſtome. So that if men would but live ſuitably to their Rationall Natures, the corrupted and vicious manners of the Age and Place they live in, could have no Influence upon their Practices; for Cuſtome is a thing without us, of the good or evil whereof we are as well able to judge, as of other things, (for we are not Parrots, but men born with rational Faculties) and therefore if we impotently permit our ſelves to be ſeduced by it, we act unworthy the Faculties God has given us, and ſo deſervedly forfeit the Happineſſe that is due to our Rational Nature. Here I might argue that if mens Reaſons were not able to bear them up againſt the Torrent of their Countries Vices, it could be no crime to be borne down by the violence of the ſtream, but I have already prevented my ſelf

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in this, in what I have argued concerning the predominancy of our Rational Part over our lower Appetites; for how great soever the power of Custome may be, it cannot be more forcible then natural Inclinations, and 'tis much more easie to devest our selves of superinduced habits, then to alter that which is radicated in our Natures; and therefore if we are able to correct the Vicious inclinations that flow from the structure and composition of our Bodies, we are much more able to reclaim or quit those vicious habits, we have contracted only by casual and accidentall usages. We esteem it indeed a mighty businesse for any man to discharge his mind from the prepossessions of Custom and Education, because 'tis so rarely practised; but if we consider the nature of the thing it self, nothing can appear more easie and practicable; in that all men are endued with rationall and reflecting Faculties, and no action costs lesse pains then a reflecting thought, and nothing more obvious and palpable then the different Natures and Consequences of Vertue and Vice; and therefore every man that does not choose a stupid In-advertency may with an ordinary diligence disabuse himselfe from all the false and groundlesse Preconceptions of a customary Beliefe; Superinduced disciplines may corrupt, but cannot

evacuate our natural Faculties, and therefore though they may delude and inveagle our Infant Reasons, yet when we are grown to an Age capable of Rellishing morality, 'tis then as easie to cashire all absurd Customes, as it was before to be cajol'd by them. As the Earth may steam forth vapours grosse enough to cloud the Sun, and for a while check the radiations of his light, yet the *energy* of his Rayes will at length vanquish, and in spite of all their Resistance break through the thickest of those benighting clouds, and enlighten that Globe, which endeavour'd to darken him; And thus though Custome, Prejudice, and Education, may for a while cloud our Understandings, and intercept the displayes of our Reasons, yet so prevailing is their innate Brightnesse and Vigour, that (unlesse we our selves stifle their emanations) they will both discover and dispel the grosseſt delusions.

Having hitherto treated of the Forces within us, I come now to discover our Auxiliaries without, and to shew that as we are endued with Faculties, by the use whereof we may attain at Vertue and Happinesse, so also that we are aided and assisted herein by the greatest endearments and encouragements in the world, which is the next Theme I proposed to discourse of.

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As Pleaſure then is mans chiefeſt good, ſo Virtue is his higheſt Pleaſure, the Divine Goodneſſe has made it our duty to be happy, all the reſtraints that God has tied upon Mankind are ſo many engagements to confine them within the compaſſe of their own Happineſſe, and whatſoever lies beyond the lines of our Liberty, lyes beyond the limits of our content, and to tranſgreſſe them is to ſtep into continual hazzards and diſquietudes. The divine Wiſdome has made the Portions of Vertue and Vice to be as diſtant as their Natures, having entail'd on the one nothing but Sorrow and Calamity, and on the other nothing but Joy and Satisfaction. The evil effects of evil Practices are ſo ſpontaneous and natural, that though there were no ſuperinduced Penalties, Wickedneſſe would be its own Executioner. *Malitia ipſa maximam partem veneni ſui bibit*, *every vice exacts the Pennance of its own folly*. All Criminal Pleaſures conclude in Repentance, and if men would but reſolve to purſue only ἡδονὰς ἀμεταμελήτους, pleaſures that expire not in Repenting (which is all that *Socrates* preſcribed for the making men both vertuous and happy) we ſhould ſoon ſee wonderfull alterations in the lives of Men in ſpite of all thoſe fatal Propenſities, concerning which the Patrons of Preexiſtence make ſuch Tragical Declamations.

Tranquillity of mind and Indolency of body; are the most natural, most easie, and most durable pleasures in the world, these two combined together, compose the most sovereigne and standing delight of the life of man: And that man that is so expert in Moral Wisdome, as to be able out of the Masse of all his transient delights, to extract health and contentednesse, is as happy as this World can make him: And yet 'tis the very designe of all moral Vertues, first to render us capable of this state and then to procure it. Whereas they that intemperately indulge to their transient delights, because they are more sensual, do but exchange constant stable Pleasures for perishing uncertain ones, and such as conspire to create lasting and permanent miseries. And therefore *Epicurus*, who having cashier'd Providence and the Souls Immortality, was consequently obliged to discard all moral Goodnesse, yet set as high an estimate upon Vertue as any Philosopher of them all, because he apprehended it so highly conducive to Indolency of Body and Tranquillity of Mind, in which alone he expected his sovereigne Felicity: so bigge a lye is it that he placed mans Supream Happinesse in Bruitish Pleasures.

If in any respect Vertue and Religion intrench upon the liberty of our Natures, 'tis in

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the Instances of Sensuality, and yet in these there is no other restraint laid upon us, then that we live by the Rules and Measures of nature, and the Natural Appetites of a Man are temperate and reasonable; Nature desires nothing but what's useful and convenient, and its satisfactions are as innocent as necessary: So that whilst we follow the dictates and appetites of humane Nature, we do nothing contrary to Vertue and Religion: But when the Man is divided from the Beast, and his Reason separated from the inferiour and Brutish Appetites, then arise irregular and unreasonable desires, but these proceed meerly from the brutish part, and are preternatural and violent to the man: so that till we abandon Reason and the better parts of our selves, Lust is a violence to our Natures and so farre from gratifying our natural Propensities, that 'tis their greatest contradiction. But if we should suppose that Vertue consisted in a perpetual Violence to all our Appetites and Inclinations, yet its future reward being so great and glorious, there is no advised and reflecting man, but would exchange a short satisfaction of his present desires, for the hopes and assurance of Infinite felicities hereafter. It must be a strange piece of Folly and Indiscretion to prefer the enjoyment of a short, cheap, imperfect delight, before the hopes of the

the Joyes of Heaven and Eternity: For ſenſuall gratifications are ſo low and unſatisfying, that to want them can amount but to an inconſiderable miſery, whereas the future pleaſures that entertain our hopes are as great as endleſs; and therefore to miſſe them muſt needs be the ſaddeſt diſaſter man can ſuffer. So that though I ſhould grant the object of our hopes to be inevident and uncertain, yet any man, that acts beyond the Indiſcretion of a Child, will rather chooſe to forgoe the preſent Enjoyment of cheap and little pleaſures, then the probable hopes of the greateſt and moſt ſatisfying Felicities: For the naked hope and expectation of ſo great a Bleſſedneſſe is more pregnant with preſent content and ſatisfaction to the mind of man, then the enjoyment of the higheſt and moſt exquiſite delights of ſenſe. But when the wayes of Vertue are ſo pleaſant, reaſonable, and advantageous in themſelves, as though they procure, yet they need not promiſe the Bleſſings of another World, and yet are ſo endeared to us by their ineſtimable appendant rewards, as to make them delightful, though they were unpleaſant in themſelves, then certainly are they recommended to our choice by the ſtrongeſt motives and allurements that can work upon a Rational Nature. Though the Proſecution of this Argument be as pleaſant as 'tis copious,

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yet (beside that I have not now leisure to pursue it through all its particular instances) the *Pulpit* has of late afforded enough excellent Discourses upon this *Theme*, to supersede the necessity of any farther Performance of it. But if you desire to see it discoursed of in a more Philosophick way, I referre you to *Tully*'s Books *de Finibus*, where 'tis as Rationally as Largely asserted by *Torquatus* the Epicurean. And now, if Humane Nature be endued with Rational and reflecting Faculties, if it be most natural and easie for these Faculties to choose and pursue those objects that are most agreeable to their own Natures, and most conducive to Humane Felicity; If Vertue be most natural, easie, and reasonable, if it be endear'd to us by present and future delights, if Vice be contrary to the nature, interest, and reason of Men; if men have all the inducements and Perswasions in the World to pursue Vertue and Goodnesse, and as great discouragements to scare and deter them from the prosecution of Vice and Impiety, if I say these things are so, then I appeal to all Mankind whether the Divine Providence can be justly charged for leaving them too obnoxious to sin and misery.

But I easily foresee that you will enquire, if all men have such pregnant engagements to Vertue, what is the Reason of the almost unanimous viciousnesse of mankind, and that when they

they have all the Reason in the world to engage them in an indefatigable pursuit of Goodnesse, whence comes it to passe, that they should with so much eagernesse thwart both their Reasons and their Interests for the love of Vice and Wickednesse? I answer, that though sensual Inclinations, false Principles, vicious Examples, and wicked Customes, may be inducements and occasions of it, yet the only proper cause is the wilful or stupid Inadvertency of men. Inconsiderateness is that אם הרע (as the *Rabins* speak) the *root* whence all mischiefs grow: 'tis the spring and head of that torrent of wickednesse, that has alwaies overflown the greatest part of the world. For if men would but look to the end of all criminal Pleasures, they would easily discover in them much more to avert, then to entice and court their passions; but when their Appetites are passionately set upon them, they grow wild and impatient, and will enjoy though they know tis death and misery they embrace. That no man miscarries but by brutishnesse and inconsideration, I might demonstrate out of my precedent discourse; for if every man be endued with Rational Faculties, if he can reflect upon the Essential differences of good and evil, together with their natural Products, if he can observe what things tend to his damage, and what minister to his advantage, And

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if it be most apparent that vertuous practises are infinitely more conducive to the interest and happinesse of man then Vice and Luxury; then what other Reason can possibly be assigned, why men are so unanimously vicious, but onely because they are wilfully or carelesly unreasonable? But I need not put my self to the Charge of an Elaborate Dispute to prove a thing that is evidenced by the surest and most obvious of Demonstrations, *viz.* an Induction of particular Instances. For if we consider the single Obliquities of every Individual man, 'tis not onely easie to observe how they descended from carelessnesse and inadvertency, but also to convince the man himself, that had he but reflected upon the natural results and events of his Criminal actions, he would never have committed them: Take the peevishest Humorist in his hotest and most transported fits, and ask him whether it was not in his own power to have refrain'd the folly of his Impatience; I never yet met with any person so unreasonable, whom I could not at length force to own them as avoidable Indiscretions; but if any person should be so cross-grain'd as to plead a brutish necessity, it were very easie by laying afore him the circumstances, upon which his Anger kindled, to convince him that the Provocation was not irresistible. How few are so wise as to avoid

Grief for things past.

a fruitleſſe grief and anxiety for paſt, and therefore not avoidable, diſaſters? And yet what propoſition in *Euclid* more pregnant with conviction then this, that tis the abſurdeſt folly in the World to grieve for loſſes and misfortunes; in that nothing can be more evidently irrational, then by labouring in matters gone and irrecoverable, to double our miſeries to no purpoſe? And what Councel can be more unqueſtionably rational then the Advice of the Son of *Syrach*, about Mourning for Deceaſed Friends. *Take no grief to heart, for there is no turning again: thou ſhalt not do him good, but hurt thy ſelf*, Eccleſ. 38. 17. And yet all men are ſo fooliſhly inconſiderate, as upon ſuch contingencies, to afflict themſelves with a grief equally fruitleſſe and troubleſome. What Vice aſſaults us with more peremptory and importunate Temptations then Intemperance, yet any man that will be but at the pains of a Thought, to repreſent to himſelf its unpleaſant and direful conſequences, cannot but confeſſe, that its invitations are ſo far from being irreſiſtible, that no man can comply with them without the imputation of the moſt apparent Madneſſe & Folly. For who but Mad-men can be enamour'd of Gouts, Dropſies, Catarrhs, Conſumptions, broken Sleeps, reſtleſſe Nights, loathing Stomachs, and every thing that is deſtructive of health or life? And

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that these uneasie Symptomes are the natural Appendages of Intemperance, both Philosophy and Experience assure us. Whereas Temperance is a healthful and delicious Vertue, moderate Diet creates no indisposition either to the Body or the Mind; the Temperate man rises from the Table light and cheatful, and truly relishes the pleasures that the Epicure designs. But Luxury, as it addes nothing to the pleasures of Temperance, so it both afflicts us with a present dulnesse, by loading the Brain with Crudities, and laies up materials for future diseases, by loading the blood with raw and indigested humours. Though I am not so Stoically vaine, as to vye Power and Majesty with Kings and Emperours, yet sure am I that all the sumptuous Entertainments of Pallaces, afford not such exquisite dainties as are serv'd up by Temperance: Constant satiety makes us loath the most refined delicates, whilst hunger prepares such sawces, as *Apicius* with all his witty Gluttony could never tast of, and therefore *Epicurus* (that great Exemplar of a Philosophick Temperance) was wont to say, that give him but Hunger, Pulse, and Water, and he would vye delicates with *Jove* himselfe. Now certainly, if men would but represent to themselves the troublesome Appendages of intemperate earing and drinking, no morsel could appear

appear so delicious, or wine so pleasant, which they could not with much lesse trouble forbear, then suffer all the uneasie symptoms of a tired and overloaded Appetite. And although this is obvious from every dayes experience to every mans observation, yet how few are they, that can stint their Appetites at the necessities of Nature, though they are certain that all they devour beyond the satisfaction thereof, ends in surfet and oppression, onely because most men are so brutishly sottish, as to sacrifice all the contents of their lives to a moments tickling of their Palates, and like Beasts, grow wild and impatient to enjoy a trifling pleasure, which they know will expire in loathing and restlesnesse.

The Mass and Community of Mankind is but an Aggregate of Individual men, of whom the common and mechanical sort of people (a word of a vast extent) are incomparably the greater number; who yet are utterly senseless and inconsiderate, and suffer themselves to be disposed of purely by chance and accidental Principles, and are so prodigiously regardlesse, that they will not put themselves to the trouble of thinking, whether the usages Custome hath taught them, are wise and rational. And hence it is that they are alwaies floating between contrary Vices, & are not a lesse contradiction to themselves then to Vertue; one while they

they are base and servile; another proud and insolent; now stubborn and refractory, anon inconstant and changeable; envious and malicious, yet sordid and senseless to honour; credulous, and talkative, yet morose and sullen; ignorant and stupid, yet censorious and scornful; Idolaters of custome, yet Seditious and desirous of novelties: and hence as they chance to be swayed by custome, or any accidental emergencies, they rowle to any extream without setting *bounds* to their unruly progresse; and if they be suffered to run without restraint, they will break down all the banks of Law and Government; and therefore 'tis the main wisdom and policy of Governours (who are deputed by *Divine Providence* to understand and consider for them) to check the violence of the Tide, by swaying them *backwards* by contrary *laws*, and to keep them fluctuating between both Extreams, and so by alternate Fluxes and Refluxes, to preserve the Common-wealth from popular Inundations. Thus they must be kept from sinking into too much ignorance, or rising to too much knowledge in matters of—for the former renders them salvage, which is apparently destructive to Government; the latter makes them proud, conceited, and zealous, that breeds contempt of Governours, and sets them upon headlesse plots and designes of Reformation, that usually

proceed to Rebellion, and end in a deluge of civil Wars, as the experience of all ages sufficiently attests, and our own too sadly demonstrates. But the Reason of all this, and much more, is because they are unreasonably wilful and inconsiderate, for nothing but inadvertency distinguishes them from the wise and understanding part of mankind. To conclude therefore, if a sottish and regardless stupidity be the proper cause of every single obliquity (of which every man will be satisfied, that shall consider of every actions particular circumstances) 'tis evident by a very easie Inference, that all the wickednesse in the world must be its effect: For the cause of every Individual, and the whole species is the same, and therefore if every particular sin be the effect of Inadvertency, all sin must be its issue.

Of which the wisest and most experienced of men, was long since eminently sensible, whence it was that he has so earnestly recommended to mankind consideration and advertency, for the *Wisdome*, he parabolically represents in his Book of Proverbs, imports nothing but consideration, discretion, and weighing of things in opposition to that folly and stupidity which betrays men to those immortalities, from which he there so assiduously dehorts the sons of men. And that this is the only true and genuine sense of that Book, any one that shall

shall but read it over with a mind clear of those rash and unwarrantable glosses Commentators have fastned upon it, will easily acknowledge, both by the Tenour of the discourse, and by the original signification of those terms, by which he expresses the wisdome there Celebrated, and chiefly by those peculiar Properties he attributes to it, many whereof can very hardly be applyed to any thing else. And now, if folly and inconsiderateness be the Origine of the generall and unanimous Apostacy of mankind, then judge whether their crime be not of all others (not excepting even Peevishness and moroseness themselves) the hainousest and most inexcusable, for besides that 'tis aggravated by all circumstances that can enhance its guilt, nothing can be baser and more unworthy of a man; for if the dignity of humane nature consists in Reason, then certainly nothing can be more brutish and unmanly then to abandon its use, and thereby to disrobe our selves of our highest Prerogative, to renounce the Glory and Priviledge of our Natures, and in defiance of our Creators Goodness, who made us Men, to prefer the condition of Bruits & unreasonable Creatures, and in a word to dismount our Reasons, that Providence has placed in the Sadle, that the Brute might Ride the Man.

Thus (*Sir*) have I replyed to, and clear'd off, the main Ratiocinations urged on behalfe of

Preexistence, and have not declined or shuffled off any Argument for its difficulty, but have been careful that the Account I have given you might be as faithful as satisfactory. If therefore I have omitted any objections, 'twas not because I could not, but because I need not answer them, either upon the score of their being too inconsiderable, or of their entire dependance on the Arguings I have here encountred, and therefore having undermined and ruin'd their foundation, I suppose it would be but a fruitless and impertinent piece of service to beleager them by a particular onset. I have (*Sir*) so strong an antipathy against all Impertinency, that in all enquiries I have the patience only to examine the most weighty and considerable reflections, after which the less concerning matters will as little want as merit Consideration, and therefore I have not only waved all their pretty gay Probabilities, apprehending them subjects too frivolous for serious and rational discourses; but have also forborne all Duels or Personal Combats, having all along only opposed the Hypothesis, not its Patrons, for I have taken no notice of the particular miscarriages of any Adversary, and have no where objected the Inconsistency either of any Author with himself, or of more of them with one another, unless where it is apparently the fault of the Hypothesis

theſis, and not the oversight of the Men. For I muſt confeſſe (*Sir*) I am ſo far from quarrelling either with the Ancient or Modern Patrons of Preexiſtence, that I peculiarly eſteem and honour them as Perſons more then ordinarily Learned and Ingenious; and therefore though I might perhaps have triumphed over ſome weak paſſages of particular Authors, yet I have ſcarce been leſs careful to paſs by their weakeſt then I have been to aſſault their ſtrongeſt objections.

The moſt remarkable things I have purpoſely omitted are thoſe concluſions they draw from the Nature and Subſtance of the Soul, all which I have ſlighted, becauſe we are ſo utterly ignorant of its Nature that 'tis impoſſible to deduce any ſure and ſolid Speculations from it: 'Tis I know as eaſie a buſineſs to imagine Hypotheſes concerning things, whoſe Natures are placed beyond the reach of Humane Inquiſition, as 'tis for the *Roſie-Crucians* (for the confirmation of their Frenzies) to tell us of ſtrange Books, Monuments, Inſcriptions found in the inmoſt and remoteſt parts of *China*, *Japan*, and *Tartarie*, becauſe in ſuch ſtories they are ſecure from all Contradiction: But the difficulty is to give us evidence of the Truth and realitie of their Conjectures; For when they have contrived and poliſh'd a neat and

ingenious Idea of the Soul, how can they assure either mee or themselves of its agreement with the thing it selfe? And therefore of them that pretend to acquaint the world with true and real notions of its Nature, I demand by what means or methods they attain'd their knowledge; for if they came by it in a Rational way, they are able to shew by what steps and Ratiotinations they arrived at it, but because this they have never performed, they must give us leave to look upon their Hypotheses as the meer Issues and contrivances of their own Fancies. 'Tis not therefore enough to coyn Ideas of the Soul, and stamp it with what essential Characters and Properties they please, unless they can assure us of their real Conformity to the thing it self (it being otherwise precarious and uncertain) but as no such assurance was as yet ever given, so when I consider the wayes and methods of gaining acquaintance with the Natures of things, I despaire that it ever will: For though I may by Ratiocination obtain a clear and certain evidence of the Real Existence of many things, of the Essential Ideas whereof I am utterly ignorant, yet am I assured by diligent and impartial Trials, that all the Objects and Ideas I could ever with all my Industry understand were conveyed to my mind through the Organs of sense.

ſenſe. But whether any certain knowledge of the Nature and Subſtance of the Soul be attainable or not, I am ſure 'tis as yet undiſcover'd, and ſo altogether unqualified to be the Ground of any true and certain Knowledge, in that where the firſt and Fundamental Principles are inevident, all the Ratiocinations depending on them (how coherent ſoever in themſelves) muſt of neceſſity be ſo too. And therefore, for Inſtance, when they conclude againſt the ſeminal Propagation of Souls, becauſe 'tis one of the prime and chiefeſt Properties of a Spiritual eſſence to be *indiſcerpible*, they argue at a high rate of confidence and impertinency, becauſe, though perhaps the ſoul may be indiviſible, yet they are not able to produce the leaſt tollerable Evidence thereof, being utterly unacquainted with its Nature and Eſſence; and then though perchance it may be indiſcerpible in its primary and central ſubſtance, yet who knowes but it may, as well as the Body, have its *ſeminal Excreſcencies?* I am not more concern'd for the Hypotheſis of ſeminal Traduction, then for the other of Immediate Creation, for they are both to me equally uncertain, and conſequently indifferent. For as the only material objection they aſſault the former with, is that groundleſſe one I but now mention'd, ſo they object nothing ſingly againſt the latter,

but its inconsistency with the Divine Goodness to place pure and spotless Souls in such evil and sad Circumstances, as inviron us in this life; but this objection as it equally concerns all the Adversaries of Preexistence, what other soever particular Hypothesis they adopt, so 'tis already abundantly answered. So that 'tis not at all material whether the reality of either or neither of the forementioned Hypotheses be sure or evident, for notwithstanding all that is objected, either of them may, and therefore 'tis of no concernment which is.

And now *(Sir)* though both my Patience and my Pen begin to faile me, yet am I obliged as well by my Promise as my Method, to consider the most plausible passages of Scripture the Patrons of Preexistence alledge on behalf of their Hypothesis; but the application of the Texts, they produce to their designe, is so lamentably forced and frivolous, that it will scarce excuse a serious answer from being useless and impertinent. I know not any one Theological speculation, that cannot boast of more Favour and Countenance from Scripture, then this pretends to. And if you will but parallel the periods of Scripture made use of, in a small Pamphlet you have, to prove *Mulieres non esse Homines*, I am confident you will discern so vast

vast a disproportion in their evidence, as to acknowledge that if the former may be accounted probable inducements, the latter will amount to Demonstrations. And therefore perhaps I may render my self not less ridiculous by encountring them with a serious Reply, then that grave Dutch Doctor, who has with mighty transports of zeal opposed himself to that waggish Pamphlet, and has conjured up all his Dutch or Systematick Orthodoxy to confound that blasphemous Heresy as himself stiles it. But having begun, I must to avoid all suspicion of shuffling, plunge through; And though their Scripture-evidences do not merit a refutation, yet through some mens Ignorance and others Partiality they need it. Had I been left to my own choice, I should not have at all concern'd the Authority of the Divine Oracles in this dispute. For so sensible am I of that violence and injury they suffer from our presumptuous forcing them to be parties in our own trivial and imaginary speculations, that I am exceedingly averse from making any use of their suffrage, unless it be in matters of grand importance, and with all very evident and consonant to its main intendment. 'Tis the fashion amongst Opinionists to Argue in a reversed order, first they contrive Opinions and then Arguments, they adopt Hypotheses,

and

and then suborn Testimonies out of the sacred Volume to vouch them: like *Crysippus*, who (as *Laertius* records) was wont to say, that he only wanted opinions to vent, but would never want Arguments to defend his opinions. And thus the Assertors of Preexistence seem first to be enamoured with the Prettinesse of their Hypothesis, as then to seek out for Scripture expressions to countenance it. For all the testimonies they alledge would never have afforded the least intimation of it, had it not first prepossest their Fancies: Of which some of them are so sensible as to confesse, that though they doe not perswade their Hypothesis, yet they are applicable to it. But I wish they could name any opinion, howsoever vain and unwarrantable, that cannot boast as much; what's more easie then for Fancie to make pretty applications of Scripture to purposes vastly distant from its own, especially if we consider how large and miscellaneous a composure the Holy Volume is? They who are acquainted with the Customes and Tenets of the Modern Jewes, know what pretty Analogies they fetch from Scripture to abet their fond and ridiculous usages, indeed their prettinesse is so odde and surprising, that were it in any other matter, they would be as delightful as impertinent.

But

But 'tis time to advance to a closer and more particular engagement, the few hours that remain obliging me to a quick and (I fear) overhasty dispatch: but before I clear off the Texts they object, I will represent a passage or two on my own behalf. And first me thinks that's a shrew'd one *Rom. 9. 11. For the Children being not yet born, neither having done good or evill, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of him that calleth.* They that were not in a capacity of doing either good or evill before they were born, neither existed nor sin'd before; But neither *Jacob* nor *Esau* were in a capacity of acting well or ill, before they were born into this life, and therefore nor they, nor (by consequence) any others preexisted. For (1) 'tis too pittiful a shift to say that all other men, *Jacob* and *Esau* only excepted, were in Being before their Appearance upon this stage of life. And (2) 'tis most expressly against the whole design of the Apostles Argument; the Purpose of whose Discourse is to shew that Gods vouchsafing greater Instances of his Favour to *Jacob* then to *Esau*, proceeded not from any extrinsique motive of greater merit in him, but purely from the free determination and beneplaciture of his own will, οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων but κατ' ἐκλογὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ: Now this he proves, because the Choice was pitch'd upon before they were

were born, and so before they had done either good or evil. But if the souls of men had been in a capacity of acting morally, before their descent into this life, then has the Apostle argued at a strange rate of inconsequence, when he concludes that Gods different dealing with *Jacob* and *Esau* depended not on their own Actions, because the difference was resolved on before they were born, and consequently before they had done good or evil. If therefore the Apostles conclusion be consonant to the Lawes of Inference, it must be unquestionably certain that the Souls of men never acted before they were born into these Bodies.

There are a brace of Texts more, that I conceived would, without any torturing, give in evidence against Preexistence, but I find that its Patrons have already suborn'd them to speak in their Cause, and therefore I that am a modest man must be content to give up my Right in their Testimony, and to Encounter them as objections. The first is our Saviours reply to his Disciples enquiry about the man born blind, *John* 9. 3. *Neither has this man sin'd nor his Parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.* In which words he expressly affirms, that that mishap was not inflicted upon the man as a Penalty for any miscarriages he had been guilty of in any former

mer state, but that it was design'd by the Divine Providence upon a special score, namely, that he might be a fit object to evidence our Saviours miraculous Power. And yet from this very passage they argue with no small confidence against us, in that the question supposes the man might have sin'd before his Terrestrial Birth, and that the Hypothesis of Preexistence was an Opinion much in Vogue among the Jewes, and therefore when our Saviour had so fair an occasion of rectifying the common belief, and yet said nothing against it, his silence is almost as argumentative in favour of it as a positive Approbation. I answer (1.) 'tis far from being evident, that the Disciples question supposes him capable of sinning before his birth; for might they not, if they had any notions of the Divine Prescience, suppose that God foreknowing what kind of person this blind man would prove, had antedated his Punishment. Or why might they not intend his Original sinne, which the Jewes supposed to be the ruin in every individuall man, so that when they enquired whether the man was borne blind for his own or his Parents sinne, they might only ask whether that particular Judgment was the effect of any miscarriage in his Parents, or of his own Originall Pravity. (2.) It was not the Preexistence,

but

but the Metempsychosis or Transmigration of Souls that was the common Opinion of the Jews; 'tis stiled by the *Rabbins* גלגול הנפשות *the Revolution of Souls*, in opposition to their גלגול המתים *Revolution of the Dead*, whereby they meant the Rowling of the Carcasses of Jewes, (that happen to be interred in the polluted Earth of the Gentiles) through the secret Caverns of the Earth to *Palestine*, where they believe all Jews shall arise at the last Resurrection, and hence some of them have in their old age travelled to the Holy Land to lay their Bones there, to avoid the disturbance of their subterraneous Pilgrimage; and *R. Salomon* tells us the Reason why *Jacob* charg'd his Son *Joseph* to conveigh his Corps from *Egypt* to *Canaan*, was partly that his dust might not afterwards be turn'd into Lice, (a cleanly old man!) and partly to escape the trouble of this posthumous Journey: but their being impertinent tempt me not to be so too. Now that the opinion of Transanimation obtain'd among the Jewes, is proved from the testimony of *Josephus lib. 2. de Bello Jud. cap. 7.* where he relates among the dogmata of the Pharisees, that the souls of good men did not perish, but did μεταβαίνειν εἰς ἕτερα σώματα; and *Tisbi* relates that 'tis the common opinion of the Circumcised Doctors that every Soul animates three Bodies, which they (after their usual rate of arguing)

prove

prove from that passage in *Job.* 33. 29. *All these things God worketh with man,* פעמים שלש *tribus vicibus.* And by vertue of this Vicissitude, they assert the Soul of *Adam* to have inform'd the Body of King *David*, and that the Soul of *David* will by secret Revolutions wind it self into the *Messiah*, which they think is clearly intimated by the word אדם being compounded of the Initial Letters of *Adam* א, *David* ד, *Messiah* ם. As also that those two mighty Zealots *Phinees* and *Elias* were animated with the *same* spirit, because of the *resemblance* of their Zeal, and that *Lubans* Soul was translated into *Balaams*, *Abels* into *Seth*; and *Abrabanel* that bold Jew asserts, that it was *Esaus* Soul that possest our Saviour. *Manasse Ben Israel* cites several of their old Books and Authors to this purpose. And therefore, if this passage proves any thing, it proves too much, *viz.* not only the Preexistence, but also the [illegible], or perpetual revolution of Souls: For if they can infer any thing in favour of Preexistence from our Saviours silence in so apt an occasion, to have rectified the common Error concerning it, they may with the same reason conclude his Approbation of the Transmigration of Souls, this being the common Opinion of the Jews, and so as probably implyed in the Disciples Quere.

(3) It was not our Saviour's custome to take notice

notice of every impertinent Question, much lesse the suppositions on which they relyed. Thus when his Apostles asked him, *Acts* 1.6. *Lord wilt thou at this time restore again the Kingdome to Israel.* Though it was an important Question, and bottom'd upon a grand and dangerous mistake, he makes no reply to it, but only takes occasion thence to discourse of matters of a widely distant nature, but that more closely toucht their concernes. And therefore nothing can be fairly inferred from our Saviours silence; especially when he had replyed so fully to the direct scope of the Question, there was not any necessity he should take notice of the Theories it collaterally implied: And if the Hypothesis of Preexistence were so principally implied in the main scope of the Question as is pretended, then is it expresly enough destroyed by our Saviours plain and unlimited Negation. To conclude, he had as good ground to take occasion from their Enquiry, to discourse of the Equity of Punishing Posterity for their Ancestors sins, it being one of the main Phænomena of Providence, & of as grand importance as they can presume the Hypothesis of Preexistence to be, and yet, notwithstanding the fairnesse of the opportunity, and the weightinesse of the subject, 'tis evident he took no notice of it.

The other Resembling Passage I meet with in

in *Job.* 38. 4. where the Almighty undertakes to poſe *Job* through all the *Phænomena* of Nature, and among other particulars of the true Origine of things, and to convince him of his ignorance, he tels him he was ſo far from being acquainted with it, that he was then ſhut up in the dark ſtate of Non-exiſtence, *Where waſt thou when I laid the foundations of the Earth*, &c. Now, if all Spirits had been in Being when the foundations of the Earth where laid, as our Adverſaries conclude from the enſuing words, *when the morning ſtars ſang together, and all the Sons of God ſhouted for joy.* By the former whereof (ſay they) is intended the Angels, by the latter the bleſſed untainted Souls. But it this gloſſe were as true as 'tis precarious, then *Job* might have juſtly replied to the Almighty, that himſelf was preſent among the Sons of God at the laying the Foundations of the Earth, and joyn'd in that great and unanimous Acclamation. And then the Almighty having diſcourſed of each particular myſtery and contrivance of Nature, he concludes with this baffling Ironie, *knoweſt thou them becauſe thou waſt then born, becauſe the number of thy daies is great?* And yet they conclude from hence for Preexiſtence, becauſe the 70 render it without the Interrogation, *I know that thou waſt then born, for the number of thy daies is many.* A various Reading may ſerve

for a ſubterfuge to eſcape the force of an objected Teſtimony, but certainly tis a pitiful Argument that relies barely on the Authority of a Verſion, when it not onely contradicts the Original, but the plain deſign of its own Context. For if *Iob* had then been born, how could God have convinced him of his unacquaintedneſſe with the Origine of things, becauſe he was not then in Being? ſo that unleſſe Reaſon it ſelf be out in its Logick, our Adverſaries are.

Having thus gain'd back theſe Texts to our ſide, I paſſe on to the reſt of their objections. And firſt, as for that paſſage *Jer.* 1. 5. urged with ſo much Jewiſh confidence by *Manaſſe Ben Iſrael, Before I form'd thee in the Belly, I knew thee, and before thou cameſt forth out of the Womb I ſanctified thee, and I ordain'd thee a Prophet unto the Nations.* It implies nothing elſe but Gods deſignment of *Jeremy* to the Prophetick Office; for his *knowing* of him imports in its native and moſt unſtrained ſenſe, meerly his foreordaining him to that employment, and then his *ſanctifying* of him ſignifies in its genuine and moſt proper uſe, onely the ſeparating or devoting of him to that peculiar Office, which is exegetically expreſſed in the laſt branch of the Period; *I ordained thee to be a Prophet.* Beſides, this paſſage is peculiarly applied to the Prophet *Jeremy* in oppoſition

to

to any other, but should it have referred to his Preexistence, there had been no peculiarity, forasmuch as God would not onely have known him, but the whole Masse of mankind before they were formed in the Belly. And now what shadow of favour do these words cast upon the Origenian Hypothesis? No man could ever have discern'd the least colour for Preexistence here, whose mind was not afore hand tinctured with its beliefe. Here's not the least foundation for an Argument, unlesse this supposition were first laid, *viz.* That God cannot foreordain a Person to any special employment before he exists. And therefore to conclude, that because God had consign'd *Jeremy* to the Prophetick Office before he was born, that therefore he preexisted, is an Inference fit for none but a *Rabbi*, and upon that score I have taken notice of it onely as his, though other men have urged it with as great a grace as he.

And for that passage, *Phil.* 2. 5. *Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, did not think equality with God a prey or spoile, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likenesse of men,* &c. Its plain and palpable meaning is onely this, That though the Blessed Jesus was invested with the Divine Power and Authority, and

sustain'd the person of a Deity, being made Sovereign Lord of all (in which alone consists the Scripture notion of God) yet he did not boast and triumph in his Greatnesse, but made his appearance to the World onely in a servile condition of Poverty, and made himselfe so subject to those that seem'd his Superiours, that in obedience to their Authority he yielded himself up to a most reproachful death, not opposing his Almighty and Irresistible Power to rescue himselfe from their equally ignominious and mercilesse Decrees. And what's all this to Preexistence?

In the next place they urge us with some passages out of Saint *John And now O Father Glorifie me with thine own self, with the glory I had with thee before the world was. I come forth from the Father, and am come into the world: Again I leave the world, and goe to the Father, &c.* Whence they argue, that the Glory our Saviour prayes to be restored to, seems to concern his Humane Nature only, for the Divine could never be disrobed of it, and therefore it supposeth that he existed in his Humanity before, and that his Soul was of old before its appearance in a Terrestrial Body. *Ans.* (1.) The most these places can pretend to prove, is barely our Saviour's Preexistence, but to conclude thence the Preexistence of all mankind is a very wide and gaping

Inference;

Inference; and we may as well prove we were all born of Virgin-Mothers becauſe he was. Our Saviour was a Singular perſon deſigned for an extraordinary Employment, and therefore may be ſuppoſed to have tranſacted with his Father about it, before he undertook it, and therefore we may as well attribute all his perſonall Properties to Mankind in general, as argue for their Preexiſtence from his. (2.) Thoſe Prædicates that in a ſtrict and rigorous Acceptation agreed only to his Divine Nature, might by a communication of Idioms (as they phraſe it) be attributed to his Humane; or at leaſt to the whole Perſon compounded of them both: Then which nothing is more ordinary in things of a mixt and heterogeneous Nature, as the whole man is ſtiled immortal from the deathleſneſſe of his Soul. We ought not therefore to underſtand theſe and the like paſſages in a nice and metaphyſical rigour of this or that nature, but in a familiar ſence of the Perſon of Jeſus Chriſt. The inſtances hereof in Scripture are ſo frequent, that few Texts concerning our Saviour (ſuppoſing his double Nature) can well be underſtood without it. (3.) Me thinks *Grotius*'s ſence is very eaſie and natural *viz.* that the Glory he had with his Father before the World began, was onely in the intendment of the Divine Decree: as 1 *Pet.* 1. 20.

Revel. 13. 8. he is said to be a *Lamb slain from the foundations of the World*, not that he was really slaughtered, but because he was then marked out in the Divine decree to be a sacrifice for Mankind. It being a Proverbial forme of speech among the Jews, to expresse matters of great moment onely resolved upon in the Divine Decree, as if they were really existing: thus they say the *Messias* is antienter then the Sun, and the *Mosaick law* older then the world, not as if they apprehended them *really* so, but onely to expresse their absolute usefulnesse and necessity. Now Scriptures are not to be interpreted in an exact and strictly literal sense, but in a familiar manner suitably to the Idiom and manner of speaking used in the Age & place, in which they were written. This therefore being a vulgar form of speech to expresse the important usefulnesse of a thing existing onely in decree, as if it had been as long in actual existence, as it was in Futurity, the glory our Saviour here prays for, and which he had before the world was, as it could not, so it need not be his essential lustre, but was that honour, with which God had from all eternity design'd to dignifie the Messias. Thus have I satisfied all their Scripture Objections that can need an answer, but as for their Applications of Parables and Cabalistical interpretations, they are too impertinent to bear one.

And

And now (*Sir*) having evinced the Precariousnesse of the Origenian Hypothesis from the nature of the thing it self, and its uncouthnesse from some of the Divine Attributes, having shewn the apparent and lamentable deficiency of that evidence they produce for it, having engaged the suffrage of the Divine Oracles against it, and having given a handsome, rational, and certain account of the *Phænomena* of *Providence* without it, I hope tis sufficient to convince your self or any other ingenious and unpossest enquirer, that for any thing we are able to know, this is the first Stage upon which the Souls of men ever appeared. and that there is no need of recurring to a former scene, to solve the perplexed difficulties of Providence, and to make the plot thereof seem neat and consistent enough to be a contrivance not unworthy the Divine Wisdome.

And now (*Sir*) methinks I ought not bluntly to conclude this tedious Discourse, and it would be but good manners to complement you with unnecessary excuses, or some other little pieces of Court-ship; but you know I have long since remonstrated to these common ceremonies of the World. And though I had a mind to trouble you with Apologies, or News, or any other impertinencies, yet I have not time (being just

now

now upon the very point of my departure for *London*) to adde any more, then that I am as much as I ought or can be

My Dearest Coz.

From Trin. Coll.
Oxon. May 1.

Your &c.

The french politicke Coat [illegible]

FINIS.